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The Impact of Teacher Self-Efficacy in Writing on Instruction and Evaluation of Writing in a School District in Western North Carolina

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The Impact of Teacher Self-efficacy in Writing on Instruction and Evaluation of Writing in a School District in Western North Carolina

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Deanna Berrier under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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This dissertation was designed to examine the writing strategies and scoring practices of fourth-grade teachers on the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment and local, county-wide writing assessments by collecting data from 13 elementary schools located in rural, western North Carolina.

Both qualitative and quantitative means of data collection were implemented. Inter-rater reliability was used to determine reliability of the fourth-grade teachers' scoring using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment Rubric. Qualitative data was collected through the use of two surveys administered to the fourth-grade teachers in the county. Interviews and a focus group were also used to determine effective writing strategies and the use of rubrics.

An analysis of the data revealed the validity of the scores given at the county level by the classroom teachers using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment Rubric. An analysis of the data collected by the fourth-grade teachers through the surveys, interviews, and focus group revealed common writing-instruction strategies throughout the county and the impact self-efficacy played in writing instruction and the use of rubrics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Writing in the United States is viewed as a means of fostering critical thinking in all areas of the curriculum. Thus writing assessments at the state level have become commonplace in many states (Baldwin, 2004). In their article on writing assessment, Gansle, VanDerHeyden, Noell, Resetar, and Williams (2006) state that “Despite the historically disproportionate emphasis on the reading component of literacy, writing remains an essential component of literacy and is fundamentally important to vocational and adaptive success in modern technological cultures” (p. 436). The need for students to have the ability to express themselves in writing has caused an increase in the emphasis on writing instruction.

> The increased focus on writing, with its accompanying prescriptive standards of achievement, has caused some teachers to attend to writing more than they have in the past. Yet many are conflicted about their roles as facilitators and advocates for children writing as opposed to molders of uniform products of children’s writing. (Strickland et al., 2001, p. 385)

This study examined writing instruction and practices that best support student success with written expression. Research has been examined concerning factors that contribute to writing difficulty and the impact that teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction plays in student writing success. Finally, the research analyzed the use of rubrics for evaluation. The discrepancy in scoring practices among evaluators when using rubrics was analyzed using inter-rater reliability. Yun (2003) further suggested a discrepancy in scoring practices due to the perceptions of raters (evaluators) and the possibility of teacher bias, which contributes to the validity of the assessment.

Using inter-rater reliability, a group of 130 students were tracked over the course of their fourth-grade year to determine patterns in scoring practices using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment Rubric. Student scores on two locally-administered, unassisted writing assessments during the year as well as final state assessment were compared to determine the validity and reliability of the scorers.

Data were collected on teacher self-efficacy in the use of writing instruction strategies utilized in fourth-grade classrooms. These data were collected through

surveys, interviews, and a focus group administered during the 2008-2009 school year.

Problem Statement

Students must have the ability to write to be successful both in college and in the workplace. Based on reports by the National Commission on Writing (2003),

> The majority of both public and private employers say that writing proficiency has now become critical in the workplace and that it directly affects hiring and promotion decisions. The demand for writing proficiency is not limited to professional jobs but extends to clerical and support positions in government, construction, manufacturing, service industries, and elsewhere. In fact, about 30% of government and private sector employees require on-the-job training in basic writing skills. Private companies spend an estimated $3.1 billion annually on remediation. (As cited in Graham & Perin, 2007, p.8)

These reports suggest the importance of understanding which strategies and means of evaluation best support students in their writing.

More importantly, when analyzed over a 3-year period, there was little growth in the overall proficiency level of

the students within the county being studied. There are many factors that contribute to student success in writing. The level of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction, the level of teacher understanding in the use of rubrics for evaluation, and the strategies that best support writing are all factors that impact student success in written expression. Research needed to be conducted to examine these factors and the roles they play on student writing success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction impacted the strategies used for writing instruction and the understanding of rubrics as a means of evaluation in a school system in western North Carolina. There is little research available on the result of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction and its impact on writing strategies and the use of rubrics as evaluation tools. This study served as a resource in understanding teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction and the use of rubrics.

Context of the Problem

All fourth-grade students in the state of North Carolina participated in the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment. The scoring of the writing assessment

was outsourced to a company outside North Carolina. The company used a rubric designed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to score the writing assessments. Students in the school district studied participated in two locally-administered, unassisted county writing assessments in addition to the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment. These assessments were scored by the classroom teacher using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment Rubric.

Background and Significance of the Study

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction required that students in the fourth grade be administered the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment. To assure uniformity in scoring, the state supplied the rubric used to evaluate the North Carolina Fourth-Grade Writing Assessment (see Appendix A). The students received two scores from two different scorers. They received a score for conventions, or the mechanics of their paper, and a content score. The content score was used to determine the student's mastery level in the areas of focus, organization, support and elaboration, and style. The conventions score determined the student's understanding of mechanics, usage, and sentence formation (NCDPI, 2002). During the school year, the student's writing on the

locally-administered writing assessments were evaluated using the same North Carolina Writing Assessment Rubric.

Table 1 shows the proficiency for each school in the study group over a 3-year period.

Table 1

Percent Proficiency of Students in Each School

	Percent Proficiency		
School	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
School A	57.1	26.9	(n=26) 76.9
School B	37.0	43.2	(n=47) 65.9
School C	53.7	42.4	(n=67) 62.6
School D	43.9	47.9	(n=113) 59.2
School E	15.6	31.6	(n=46) 60.8
School F	51.1	44.4	(n=44) 63.6
School G	48.0	46.0	(n=93) 69.8
School H	43.2	41.7	(n=66) 69.7
School I	32.5	63.6	(n=41) 65.8
School J	32.4	40.0	(n=40) 40.0
School K	37.1	36.0	(n=47) 29.7
School L	45.8	64.7	(n=26) 65.3
School M	52.9	63.9	(n=61) 80.3

The rural school system located in the foothills of North Carolina, which was analyzed during this study,

consisted of 13 elementary schools. The schools range in size from less than 200 students to a little over 800 students. Table 2 illustrates the enrollment of the schools in the school system studied.

Table 2

Total Number of Students During the 2007-2008 School Year

School	District	Total Number of Students
School A	Central	167
School B	East	318
School C	Central	441
School D	West	859
School E	Central	261
School F	West	285
School G	North	602
School H	North	503
School I	Central	284
School J	East	245
School K	East	283
School L	North	178
School M	Central	411

Each of these schools has participated in similar professional development and writing programs, which include, *Write From the Beginning, Thinking Maps,* and the *North Carolina Writing Training Manual*.

During the course of the year, each fourth-grade student was administered two county-wide, unassisted writing assessments. These assessments were given in October and December. The same students also took the state North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment in March. After these students completed the Fourth Grade Writing Assessment, a comparison was made using inter-rater reliability to determine the reliability of the scoring practices by the fourth-grade teachers. Factors such as uniformity in scoring content and conventions aided in determining the inter-rater reliability and consistency of the evaluators at the school level.

Teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction can affect the student's attitude when writing. Students must believe that their writing can improve. Teachers have the ability to modify a student's perception concerning writing by changing the attitudes of his or her students. This can be accomplished by teaching students a process for writing (Reimer, 2001). They must understand that writing's purpose is to convey thoughts and feelings.

Research Questions

The research posed the following research questions to guide the study:

1. What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing on writing instruction?
2. What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing on evaluation of writing in a school system in western North Carolina?
3. How do the ratings of locally-scored writing assessments compare to state-scored writing assessments?

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used:

Writing Self-efficacy- The belief in oneself concerning his or her writing abilities and the effect it has on student writing abilities.

Personal Efficacy- The teacher's confidence in his or her ability to affect student learning.

General Efficacy- The external factors that affect the teacher's ability to teach. These may include family background, social class, and intelligence.

Summary

Writing is a necessary skill that students need to be successful in life. Moreover, it should be an integral part of each student's daily instruction. Students must be given a variety of different means of instruction when they

are learning to write. Many factors influence a student's ability in written expression. Teacher self-efficacy in writing, understanding of the rubric as a means of evaluation, student attitudes, and writing strategies are also external factors that can contribute to student success or failure in writing.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This research examined the scoring practices, the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction, different writing strategies, and best practices for writing instruction as related to a study of a school system in the foothills of North Carolina. This literature review focuses on various themes that relate to writing instruction and scoring practices.

Students of all ages can experience difficulty in written expression. The frustration of writing difficulties can be discouraging to both the students and the teachers (Saddler, Moran, Graham, & Harris, 2004). There are certain elements that are present in most good writing. Once students are exposed to a variety of writing strategies, as well as structured feedback, they can begin to form their own sense of style in their writing. Students no longer have to be concerned about each element of the writing process as a separate piece but are allowed to focus on their work as a cohesive unit. Moreover, students no longer feel insecure in their written expression. It is important to allow students to gain their own sense of writing self-efficacy (Saddler et al.).

The Writing Process

Writing is a process in which the writer must pass through many phases. Each phase of the writing process becomes a scaffold for the next. Students must be actively involved in the writing process through hands-on activities that take place before, during, and after the actual writing process (Reimer, 2001).

Writing is an evolving progression in which the writer begins by forming a structure for the writing and ends with publishing his or her writing. The structure or scaffold is known as the pre-writing phase. Within this phase, students begin the process of gathering ideas for later use. Pre-writing can take on many shapes and forms such as reading, brainstorming, clustering, debating, mapping, or free writing (Reimer, 2001). Some or all of these strategies can be present during the pre-writing phase.

The next phase within the writing process is the writing or composing phase. During this phase, students are beginning to put their thoughts and ideas on paper. They are beginning to determine the direction that they would like their writing to go. Even though this stage is more structured than the pre-writing phase, it still allows for spontaneity and creativity because students may still

form new ideas and directions for their writing (Reimer, 2001).

Once the students have moved from the writing or composing phase, they can move on to the sharing and responding phase. According to Reimer's article on teaching strategies (2001), "The writer may become so absorbed in their writing that they forget about their audience entirely. Or, they may think they are saying one thing, but the reader understands something completely different" (p.9). Reimer further states that allowing students to share their writing gives them perspective and constructive feedback. Both the writer and the listener can use the sharing and responding phase as a learning experience. The listener can gain ideas for his or her writing while the writer is given valuable insight to restructure the existing composition.

Following the sharing and responding phase, the writing process moves to the revision phase. This stage is not for editing but rather for using the information gained during the share and respond phase to rework an existing text. This may include adding, rearranging, deleting, or substituting words to form a clearer picture. This phase is not a single event but an ongoing process that can be done during and after the initial writing (Reimer, 2001).

When students are truly taught strategies to revise and edit, they will show improvement in both content and conventions (Kolling, 2002). The more they revise and edit their work, the higher their level of understanding will be. After the students have worked and reworked their writing, a focus can then be placed on the mechanics and conventions. The teacher and the students need to work together during this phase to help the students identify grammatical errors. Reimer (2001) also states that it is important to teach the students what to look for rather than to rely on the teacher to determine grammatical errors.

The final phase in the writing process for the students is the publishing phase. Publishing a student's writing can be achieved by writing a final draft or by sharing the composition with an audience. This is an important part in the writing process because it gives value and a sense of accomplishment to the students. Beginning a classroom library of student writing helps students appreciate one another's work. It can also become a launch pad or springboard for other students as they use ideas that are generated by their peers (Reimer, 2001).

Even though the writing process is over for the students, there is still one component left, the evaluation

phase. Within this phase, the teacher can either formally grade a student's writing sample or verbally give feedback. By sharing a dialogue or through conferencing, students are given constructive ways to improve their writing (Reimer, 2001).

Conferencing

The sharing of constructive ideas is part of all phases of the writing process. The process is called conferencing. During conferencing, a student should feel free to talk with the teacher. The student and the teacher are free to discuss ideas, answer questions and formulate ways to rework existing writing samples. In some cases, conferencing can be done among peers (Richgels, 2002).

When conferencing is used within the classroom with students, they begin to see their errors as a means of learning. In essence, they begin to take more chances with their writing because they no longer fear failing (Cicalese, 2003).

Factors that Contribute to Writing Difficulties

In the area of writing, students of all ages struggle to take in all that teachers present to them. Kern, Andre, Schilke, Barton, and McGuire (2003) suggest that writing is such a vast subject that many students are not given adequate time to master the art of writing. Students must

receive a significant span of time devoted solely to writing to truly grow as writers. Writing should be a daily practice within the classroom in all subject areas. When it is not part of their daily routine, students do not gain confidence in their writing abilities (Gau, Hermanson, Logar, & Smerek, 2003). Teacher expectations and attitudes dramatically impact the students' attitudes towards writing.

Not only do teacher expectations impact student motivation to write, but home values can as well. Many students enter school with no value placed on writing within their home. They have very little experience with or exposure to written texts. As a result, students must be taught to appreciate the art of written language. They have to learn its value to society in both a global and a personal sense (Reimer, 2001).

Writing Strategies

Before a student actually learns to write, it is important to instill an appreciation for quality texts. Reimer (2001) suggested several ways to enhance students' appreciation for writing and their desire to write. One visual means of representing to children what they have created and showing them the progress they have made is by having a folder, such as a portfolio, for each student's

writing samples. By taking students' writings to the next level and publishing them within the classroom, students can place a lasting importance on their writing. Creating a portfolio for writing is a valuable tool for both students and parents. Koelper and Messerges (2003) add that portfolios are a means of communication that help identify areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Kern et al. (2003) states that when students are continuously engaged in the writing process through direct instruction and are immersed in literature, they will begin to organize their own compositions. Literature is an integral part of writing instruction, thus reading and writing go hand in hand. When taught in conjunction, writing can improve reading and reading can improve writing. The exposure to literature allows students to not only hear, but also to see words on paper. They can use literature as a model for their own writing. In 2001, Reimer found that good literature can teach skills and techniques such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, metaphors, rhythm, tension, and foreshadowing.

Gau et al. (2003) promote the use of journals and writing in the content areas. It is further suggested that frequent use of writing within the context will improve student attitudes towards writing while creating more

opportunities to write. Smith, K., Rook, and Smith, (2007) examined the use of journals in the content area with at-risk students. The results of their study showed that responding in journals promoted thinking skills, allowed for the students to make personal connections to the content they were studying, and increased self-efficacy in the students. According to a study by Gammill (2006), “If students can learn by writing, then writing can provide a means of learning in other disciplines” (p.754). Therefore, writing is a tool for learning in many disciplines. Writing within the content area helps students retain information as well as reflect critically about the content (Gammill).

Saddler et al. (2004) promote the idea that young writers in the primary grades should be given additional practice on handwriting and spelling instruction. By improving these areas, students increase output and improve sentence-writing skills. Students need to receive, on average, 4 days of writing instruction each week (Roth, 2000).

Many of the strategies to prevent writing difficulties can be used daily in writing instruction even through testing years. Smith (2003a) gives six basic traits that are necessary in improving writing performance. These

traits include: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. This model insures that students will have a well-structured and fluid paper. The formulated outline further promotes confidence in both struggling and developing writers (Smith).

There are additional frameworks that can be used to help students become independent writers. One practice is teaching students to become self-regulated writers. This strategy is composed of four basic components that include self-instruction, goal setting, self-monitoring and self-reinforcement (Harris, Mason, Graham, & Saddler, 2002). There are six stages that a writer must go through to become a self-regulated writer. Harris et al. (2002) believe that these stages include the following:

1. Develop and activate background knowledge. During this stage, teachers assess their students' prior knowledge on a subject.
2. Discuss the strategy. This stage includes a dialogue between the student and the teacher where they work together to address the student's individual needs. They then determine an appropriate strategy.
3. Model the strategy. The teacher enthusiastically models the strategy that was determined in the previous stage.

4. Memorize the strategy. The student commits the steps of the strategy to memory.
5. Support the strategy. During this stage the teacher continues to facilitate the students by reviewing and reinforcing the strategy.
6. Independent performance. Once the students have reached this stage, they are now independent writers who can use the strategies on their own. (p.112)

Modeling can be another effective strategy to promote writing in the classroom. During the early years of writing instruction, students need to receive modeled instruction in the art of planning and organizing their writing. Extra time devoted to planning for writing instruction allows students to consider writing as a task in story telling rather than such a laborious endeavor (Saddler et al., 2004).

Students need to see the teacher develop ideas and formulate a plan to organize his or her thoughts. Teachers must talk through the writing process and allow the students to be actively engaged in the writing process. The ability for teachers to model writing behaviors is an integral characteristic of an effective teacher (Richardson, 1992). Students as a group need to participate in hands-on activities, before, during, and

after the writing process. In addition to the benefits of modeling experienced by the students, modeling also benefits the teacher. It gives perspective on the struggles that students experience when writing (Reimer, 2001).

Not only is teacher modeling seen as an effective strategy for improving student writing, it also enriches student vocabulary. Vocabulary enrichment is another aspect of writing instruction that impacts the quality of student work. In Brynildssen's (2000) study on the benefits of vocabulary on successful writing, the author concludes that, "The breadth and depth of a student's vocabulary will have a direct influence upon the descriptiveness, accuracy, and quality of his or her writing" (p.2). Smith (2003c) also places great importance on enriching students' vocabulary. Smith gives six methods to ensure vocabulary development:

1. Teachers must be enthusiastic in teaching learning strategies for vocabulary development.
2. Teachers must offer direct instruction of techniques or procedures to develop a varied vocabulary.
3. As new words are being taught, they must be connected to previous knowledge and experiences and

integrated into other content areas within the classroom.

4. Intensive practice and repetition are important to developing familiarity with words and understanding how they are used.
5. Learner involvement is necessary in applying definitions to various situations appropriately.
6. Schools, teachers, and students commitment to vocabulary development in the long-term occurs when this is made an integral part of the whole curriculum at every level. (p.4)

The process of learning how to make good word choices is a skill that will aid students in being actively involved in the writing process. Concerning word choice, Smith (2003d) proposes that:

> Word choice is defined as the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader. It is the love of language, a passion for words, combined with a skill in choosing words that creates just the right mood, impression, or image in the heart and mind of the reader. (p.3)

Vocabulary enrichment is vitally important. On many occasions students do not know how to express themselves

without the use of gestures or tone of voice to mimic a sound. Students then need to take the vast vocabulary in conjunction with a firm grasp on conventions to convey their thoughts on paper. Reimer (2001) suggests that students constantly write and rewrite to see the evolution of their writing and to understand the similarities and differences between spoken and written language. Once they have grasped both the similarities and the differences, they can begin to cultivate their own voice within their paper.

Grouping Students for Instruction

The way in which students are grouped can also impact writing instruction. There are many ways to group students within the classroom. Students can be grouped homogeneously according to ability or heterogeneously. Manning, M. and Manning, G. (1995) oppose the use of ability grouping because it does not help to promote an atmosphere that challenges students. Manning and Manning further suggest that grouping students heterogeneously rather than by ability allows students to develop respect for one another's abilities. When students are grouped in the classroom, they need to have opportunities to work with students of differing ability levels. There are several

forms of grouping. Students can be grouped in pairs, small groups, and large groups.

During paired grouping, students can support and assist each other. In contrast to paired grouping, when students participate in small groups, they have an opportunity to cooperate and learn through interaction with a more diverse group of individuals. Large groups can be beneficial in introducing a concept or an activity in which whole class participation is necessary. Within whole-class settings, the teacher may present a mini-lesson to a large group (Manning & Manning, 1995). Papers can also be shown on the overhead projector so that students can discuss as a class how and why a paper was given a particular score (Strickland et al., 2001). This kind of instruction can align with mini-lessons or brief targeted lessons that address specific needs (Smith, 2003b). In writing-centered classrooms where teachers individualize writing instruction and give short lessons to small groups on how to improve their writing, students will begin to value writing as a means of self-expression (Smith). In addition to choosing appropriate grouping of students to support writing instruction, the teacher must also choose the appropriate means of evaluation of student writing.

Evaluation of Writing

There are various forms of writing evaluation available to educators. A strict grading system of numbers and grades is one way that writing can be evaluated. Mahon (2005) argues against this strict practice of writing evaluation:

> Even worse, "doing it by the numbers" focuses on those parts of the trade, such as format, mechanics, and organization, that are, to some extent, governable by hard and fast "rules" that can then be quantified by the teacher. Unfortunately, this focus distracts both teacher and student from the basics of writing: informing and entertaining. (p. 102)

He further suggests that students are still unaware of what constitutes an A or a B on writing assessments. The subjectivity of writing causes a flaw in the scoring of a students' writing.

Rubrics

Another form of writing evaluation is the use of rubrics. Rubrics have become the latest tool in an educator's evaluation tool belt. When used correctly, they are a valuable resource for authentically evaluating a student's understanding of concepts. Rubrics can be found

in all curriculum areas. While rubrics are still a systematic approach to writing evaluation, they help to clarify the expectations of the teacher prior to writing. In Groeber's book (2007) on rubric design, the author asserts,

> A rubric is a flexible assessment tool. A rubric allows teachers to make more precise and useful measurements because, unlike conventional grading methods in the areas of language arts and reading, the rubric lists criteria necessary to attain graduated levels of mastery. (p. 2)

Rubrics are an excellent way to evaluate students while also meeting individual student's needs.

Rubric Arrangements and Construction

Most rubrics are designed or arranged in a similar manner in a grid format. The skills, behaviors, and attitudes that are required are placed along the vertical axis. Along the top of the rubric are the degrees of proficiency. The order of degrees can be done to the designer's discretion. There is no set way to design the rubric. According to Groeber (2007), "Some educators believe that putting the minimum standards first encourages students to set their goals too low and settle for a mediocre performance. Other educators believe that putting

the most difficult standards first discourages less proficient students" (p.12). Within the entire process of rubric design, the educator has the ability to create a rubric that best fits the learning outcomes. The final component of the rubric is the scoring column. In the scoring column, the educator has the freedom to distinguish between the differing areas of importance being assessed.

While rubrics can be manipulated to differentiate for students, there are some aspects of the rubric that are essential. All rubrics must have a goal that measures the objectives. Rubrics must also have a range of guidelines that allow the students to know the different levels of performance being assessed (Groeber, 2007). Stuhlmann, Daniel, Dellinger, Kenton, and Powers (1999) determined that it is important that this rubric also have clearly stated criteria that distinguishes between different levels of quality.

Arter and Chappuis (2007) outline an eight-step process in developing a rubric:

Step 1: Choose a Learning Target Worth the Time

Step 2: Search out Existing Relevant Scoring Guides

Step 3: Gather Samples of Student Work

Step 4: Sort Student Work

Step 5: Group Like Indicators Together

Step 6: Identify Student Work That Illustrates Each Level on Each Criterion

Step 7: Test the Rubric and Revise It as Needed

Step 8: Repeat the Cycle of Scoring and Revising (p.68-80)

When constructing a rubric, one must begin by identifying the skill to be assessed. The designer must determine that the skill being assessed is neither too specific nor too broad. Once the skill has been identified, one must examine the task and assure that the components of the rubric aid in determining the students' understanding of the objective. A rubric developer must also collect examples of existing rubrics (Arter & Chappuis, 2007). Collecting rubrics that have already been designed helps the developer to choose appropriate vocabulary and criteria. The next step in rubric development is sorting out student work by proficiency levels. This sorting will aid the consistency of evaluating the student's work.

After sorting the student samples, the teacher must become more analytical in looking at the student's work. The evaluator must look for areas of weakness in each piece in order to form criteria categories. The next step is to

choose writing samples that can be used to illustrate the expectations for each level of proficiency. These examples are indicators that can be utilized to show the students what best exemplifies the criteria in each category. Once the examples have been identified, the designer may test the rubric in a true situation. This step allows for reflection on what areas need to be modified. The final step is to continuously repeat the cycle to make a more precise rubric that best fits the learning outcomes (Arter & Chappuis, 2007).

There are many Internet websites that have rubrics available for teacher use as well as rubrics that can be manipulated to fit the activity. Arter and Chappuis (2007) admit that they "recommend begging, borrowing, and stealing (well maybe not stealing) general rubrics if at all possible. Develop them only if a survey of what is available yields no promising candidates" (p.67). A quality rubric that is clearly and accurately written can be difficult to develop. Thus, pre-generated rubrics can be beneficial resources to rubric designers.

Benefits of Rubrics

Rubrics can be used as a tool in the learning process of writing. Due to the authenticity of rubrics, they can be the link between the learning process and the

assessment. In Andrade's article (2000) "Using Rubrics to Promote Thinking and Learning, the educator is encouraged that "When used correctly, they serve the purposes of learning as well as of evaluation and accountability. Like portfolios, exhibitions, and other authentic approaches to assessment, rubrics blur the distinction between instruction and assessment" (p.13). Students can improve their writing abilities by using rubrics in identifying errors and assessing their own work (Yoshina & Harada, 2007). Saddler and Andrade (2004) state, "An important goal in writing instruction is to help students develop the self-regulation skills needed to successfully manage the intricacies of the writing process. Instructional rubrics can provide the scaffolding that students needed to become self-regulated writers" (p.49).

While the use of rubrics may mean additional work on the part of the teacher, the benefits far exceed the added work. Often the student can be part of the rubric writing process. By participating in the construction of the rubric, students are able to take ownership of their own learning. Groeber (2007) asserts that "The most obvious reason is the rubric's unique capacity to quantify student performance in a relatively objective manner" (p.3). One of the most important benefits of a rubric is the ability

to allow teachers to determine the criteria that is necessary for a given task. By participating in developing the rubric, students have the added advantage of knowing the expectations at each level. Additionally, rubrics may provide not only students but also parents with clear expectations by eliminating any confusion or frustration (Groeber).

Rubrics can be used in all areas of the curriculum. In the classroom, an educator can use rubrics for everything from assessing students' understanding of math concepts to evaluating performance-based projects. By using a rubric, the teacher is able to gain a clearer picture of the students' true understanding of the concepts being addressed. All aspects of the learning can be evaluated. The learning process moves from basic learning to higher-order thinking in which the students are responsible for organizing, illustrating, and determining a rational answer.

The Inconsistencies of Rubrics

Stuhlmann et al. (1999) determined that in order for a rubric to be valid and reliable, it must have the ability to provide a teacher with information that will be beneficial to assessing student performance. Stuhlmann et al. presented the concern that different examiners, when

given a complex scoring rubric, do not draw similar conclusions when scoring students' writing. This presents the question, does a student's score reflect the quality of the student's work or is it a measure of the evaluator?

An additional inconsistency with rubrics was stated by Mabry (1999), "Rubrics standardize the teaching of writing, which jeopardizes the learning and understanding of writing" (p. 674). While rubrics can outline writing expectations, for students they may also make the process of writing too structured and systematic.

Popham (1997) defined four flaws with both teacher-made and commercially-published rubrics. These flaws include: (a) Task-specific evaluative criteria, (b) excessively general evaluative criteria, (c) dysfunctional detail, and (d) equating the test of the skill with the skill itself.

The inconsistency of writing evaluators using rubrics can affect students' proficiency on writing assessments. In 1998, Fitzpatrick, Ercikan, Yen and Ferrara studied evaluators over 3 years in high-stakes testing grades. The results showed that the consistency between scores in third and fifth grade were much less consistent than those of eighth grade. Therefore, a students' score is not only a

reflection of his or her writing level but also the scoring experience of the evaluator.

Student Writing Self-efficacy

The research of Stemper (2002) highlighted the reactions of students towards writing. Their attitudes changed significantly when they were given more instruction in the revising and editing of their writing. More importantly, the teachers in this research improved their writing instruction by creating a positive environment where they modeled strategies of a good writer. Within the study group, teachers began each lesson with a skill-oriented mini-lesson. Their writing instruction also included peer-editing and teacher/student conferencing. The attitudes of the students changed dramatically when their classroom became a writing-centered classroom.

Teacher Self-efficacy in Writing Instruction

Buhrke, Henkels, Klene, and Pfister (2002) suggest that many teachers do not feel that they have been adequately prepared or trained in the writing process. With the pressures of state writing assessments, they do not feel that they have received staff development that targets writing instruction.

Richardson (1992) adds that teachers know that writing instruction is an important piece of a student’s education;

however, most teachers fear the large amounts of paperwork associated with writing.

A study by Graham, Harris, and Fink in 2001 set out to determine whether teachers with a high level of self-efficacy tend to be better organized and more likely to try new strategies to support writing within the classroom. In addition, their study also indicated that teachers with a positive sense of self-efficacy are more positive with students and less critical of errors. The increased levels of self-efficacy produced students who worked harder and showed higher levels of writing achievement. Their findings supported their original hypothesizes about the relationships between teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction and student growth and motivation in writing. Upon the conclusion of their study, the same teachers within the study who spent a greater amount of time on grammar and basic writing process instruction had a high sense of personal efficacy. Teachers with a high level of self-efficacy in writing instruction allowed the students more frequent writing experiences. The teachers who had a low level of self-efficacy were less confident in their own ability to teach writing.

North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment

The North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment is administered in early March. Scores for each student arrive in late May. The writing assessment tests the student both on the ability to write in the narrative domain and the grasp on the English language.

Students may be asked to write either a personal narrative or an imaginative narrative piece. A personal narrative is a story that could be based on a true story whereas an imaginative narrative can go outside the domains of reality. The students' scores are determined by two components, conventions and content. The student can receive a score of 0 to 4 points in content and 0 to 2 points in conventions. A content rubric and a conventions rubric is used by two evaluators to determine the score of the student's paper. The content score is doubled and added to the conventions score. Based on the number of points that are obtained, the student can earn a total achievement score of 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2008). In order to show proficiency, the student must receive a final score of three or four. As with all testing, it is important for an educator not to teach to the test. Students need to be

able to write in order to inform, persuade, or to retell a story (Kern et al., 2003).

Summary

Students need a variety of means and strategies to improve their writing. By constantly modeling and repeating the important aspects of writing, students will begin to internalize the foundations of written expression. On-going evaluation is necessary to determine the changing needs of each student. Writing should become a personal act beyond an assignment. Once students have truly committed to the writing process, their writing will improve, as will their attitude towards writing. Students need to be immersed in a classroom that values writing as a means of self-expression and communication.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine how teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction affects the strategies for writing instruction and accuracy of teacher scoring of writing using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Rubric. Scores on local writing assessment throughout the students' fourth-grade year were compared to their scores as fourth graders on the North Carolina State Writing Assessment. The scores the students received during the year were used to analyze the accuracy of scoring practices of teachers at the county level. This study also examined the attitudes of teachers concerning writing instruction.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were utilized during the study. Qualitative research was done through the use of surveys, interviews, and focus groups with the fourth-grade teachers within the county. Quantitative data was also collected using the scores the students receive on the two local unassisted writing assessments administered by their teachers in October and December. The scores the students received from the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment were used to determine student growth and teacher scoring validity using the same rubric.

Participants

Students who participated in both local unassisted writing assessments and the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment during the 2007-2008 school year were the eligible participants for this study. Students who satisfied the criteria for selection were placed on a list in random order. The sample for this study (N=130) was stratified by school. Each strata consisted of 10 students from each of 13 elementary schools within the district. Selection of the individual students for each school were randomly selected by using a systematic method. Every third student on the school's roster was chosen. The fourth-grade teachers for 2007-2008 were also asked to participate in the study. They were included in the teacher writing self-efficacy survey and the writing orientation questionnaire. All current fourth-grade teachers for the 2008-2009 school year were invited to take part in the interviews and the focus group.

Instrumentation

During the fourth grade, the students were evaluated at the school level by their classroom teachers using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Rubric on two unassisted, county-wide, quarterly writing assessments administered in October and December. The same rubric was

used to evaluate the students when they were administered the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment in March 2008. This writing assessment was scored by two trained readers contracted by the state (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2007, pp. 9).

To determine patterns in the writing strategies and levels of teacher writing self-efficacy, two surveys were administered to the fourth-grade teachers. The surveys administered were the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), and the Writing Orientation Scale (Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2001). Both instruments have been validated in previous studies. Interviews and a focus group were also utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the practices that best support writing instruction and the impact that teacher self-efficacy in writing plays on student achievement.

Procedures

A writing quarterly assessment was administered locally to the students in October 2007 and December 2007. The writing assessments were scored by individual teachers from each school using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment Rubric. At the school level, 10 students were randomly selected by choosing every third student from the list of eligible students to form the

sample. This process was continued until all 10 students had been chosen and placed on a roster. In March 2008, all fourth-grade students participated in the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment. The scores the 10 randomly selected students from each school received on the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment were added to the dataset. These scores were compared to the locally-administered scores.

During the 2008-2009 school year, two surveys were administered to the fourth-grade teachers within the county. The data was then analyzed to determine teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction as well as writing strategies that are utilized in different classrooms. Upon completion of the surveys, the fourth-grade teachers were invited to participate in interviews and in a focus group to further enhance the study (Appendix E and F).

Data Collection

The scores of 10 students from each school who met the criteria of having two locally-administered writing assessments scores and a state writing assessment score formed the dataset. The North Carolina Scoring Model has two components, conventions and content (See Appendix B). Each student could achieve a score between 1 and 4 on the content portion and 0 to 2 on the conventions component.

The score was determined by combining the content and conventions scores using this formula: Sum (content by two readers times two) + Sum (conventions scores from two readers times one) = Total Writing Assessment Score. The combined scores may be either a minimum of 4 or a maximum of 20. The achievement levels a student may receive are: Level I (4-7), Level II (8-11), Level III (12-16), and Level IV (17-20).

Qualitative data were also received on two surveys administered to the fourth-grade teachers during the 2008-2009 school year. The first survey (See Appendix C) that was administered to the fourth-grade teachers was the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) and the second survey (See Appendix D) used was the Writing Orientation Scale (Graham, Harris, & Fink, 2001). The teachers answered both the surveys using a Likert scale.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the fourth-grade teachers were invited to participate in interviews and in a focus group. Throughout the interviews and focus group session, information was gained concerning the level of self-efficacy in writing instruction, the use of rubrics, and writing instruction strategies, and common themes were identified.

Data Analysis

Teacher self-efficacy survey results were correlated with rubric scores on both local and state writing tests to determine the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and scoring practices. These results were validated by themes that emerged from content analysis of interview and focus group data. The results of the teacher self-efficacy survey and writing orientation scale, interview, and focus-group data were examined to validate the impact of teacher self-efficacy and instructional practices.

Writing scores from locally-developed writing tests were compared to state writing-test scores to determine what differences occur among the convention, content, and overall rubric scores.

Limitations

Teacher bias in scoring was a major limitation within this study; however, patterns of growth or decline could still be identified.

A further limitation of this study was the capability of receiving surveys back from all the teachers in fourth grade during the 2007-2008 school year. Any teachers that may have retired or moved out of the county being studied were not part of the group. Moreover, accuracy of the answers received from the teachers on the survey may not

accurately depict the actual level of teacher self-efficacy and writing strategies used in the classroom.

A third limitation was the criteria on which the students within this study were selected. All of the students who were studied must have participated in both locally-administered county unassisted writing assessments and they must have taken the regular administration of the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment.

Delimitation

Only students randomly chosen at each school were participants in the study. These students must have participated in both the October and December county-wide quarterly assessment and the North Carolina Writing Assessment.

Summary

The anticipated outcomes of this study were that the level of self-efficacy that teachers have concerning writing impacts the mastery level of the students. A further expected outcome was that there is a discrepancy in the scoring practices of teachers throughout the county in the fourth grades using the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment Rubric.

Upon completion of this study, educators will better understand the need to align scoring practices. Also,

teachers will have been given useful tools in the delivery of writing instruction to aid in fostering positive self-efficacy in writing.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

The focus of this study was to identify scoring practices, determine the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction, and consider different writing strategies and best practices for writing instruction as related to a school system in the foothills of North Carolina. The data collected were analyzed to identify strategies for writing instruction, determine scoring practices, and consider the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction. This chapter will be organized to present the data for the research questions.

Research Question 1

What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing on writing instruction?

In January the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing and the Writing Orientation Scale were administered to the fourth-grade teachers within the school system being studied. In addition to the two surveys, the teachers were asked to voluntarily participate in individual interviews and a focus group to enhance the study through qualitative data. Thirteen teachers volunteered to participate in the interviews and 4 teachers volunteered to participate in the focus group. Thirteen interviews were done during the

months of February and March and one focus group took place during the month of March. Table 3 presents the occurrences by question of themes that emerged during the interviews (I) and the occurrences of those same themes during the focus group (F).

Table 3

Interview and Focus Group Responses

Question		Journals		Content Area Writing		Mini Lessons		Conference	
		I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F
1.	What instructional strategies do you use in your classroom to teach writing?	13	3	11	4	4	2	3	0

		Assessment		Content Area Writing	
		I	F	I	F
2.	How do you use rubrics in your classroom?	13	4	13	6

		Very C		C		Not C	
		I	F	I	F	I	F
3.	How comfortable are you with teaching writing?	3	1	8	2	2	1

		Not Enough Time		Unprepared	
		I	F	I	F
4.	How do you feel about teaching writing?	6	3	7	2

		S-Understanding of Writing		S-Assessing Students		W-Ability to Write		W-Making Time	
		I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F
5.	What are your areas of strengths and weakness related to teaching writing?	3	2	9	4	3	1	11	3

		Training for Writing		Variety of Writing Tasks		Ongoing Assessment		Use of Rubrics	
		I	F	I	F	I	F	I	F
6.	Is there anything else you that you feel is important for a successful writing program?	2	0	9	1	11	5	9	9

When asked the question, “What instructional strategies do you use in your classroom to teach writing?” a prevailing theme throughout the interviews was the common use of journal writing for writing instruction. Journals were mentioned 13 times during the interviews and 3 times during the focus group. Teachers had a high level of comfort with students writing in journals. Of the teachers interviewed, 11 also responded that writing has been a valuable tool when integrated into the other content areas, and during the focus group, content area writing was mentioned 4 times. The use of journal writing to assess student mastery within other content areas was also a theme that emerged within the focus group and interviews. Members of the focus group added that the use of rubrics can enhance the impact of journals.

Question 2 addressed the use of rubrics. During the interviews, the teachers stated that they use rubrics for evaluation 13 times, within the focus group, 4 times. One teacher shared that allowing students to participate in the process of developing the rubric allowed them to become active participants in the evaluation process. Within the conversation about the use of rubrics as a tool for evaluation, two of the members of the focus group shared their fears of using rubrics. One teacher offered that

using rubrics can be “intimidating”. This same teacher feared that she did not truly understand rubrics and that she did not know how to accurately assess students in this manner. Unlike the previous teacher, another member of the focus group added that she felt that rubrics were the only way to authentically assess students. Rubrics most commonly were used when the teachers were having the students write in the content areas. Writing within the content areas was addressed 13 times during the interviews and 6 times during the focus group.

Question 4 addressed the problems that teachers had concerning writing in the classroom. The two prevailing themes were not having enough time and being unprepared to teach students how to write. Many teachers shared that with the constant push to improve student reading and math skills, writing often does not have priority in the daily classroom schedule. This was mentioned 6 times during the interviews and 3 times during the focus group. Being unprepared to teach students how to write occurred 7 times during the interviews and 2 times during the focus group.

Question 5 presented the strengths and weaknesses that teachers have when teaching writing. The two major strengths that teachers felt that they possessed were understanding writing and assessing students needs in

writing. The two weaknesses that were mentioned the most frequently were the ability to write and the ability to make time within the school day to write.

Question 6 allowed the teachers to add any additional information concerning their writing instruction or strategies. During the interviews, 2 teachers suggested more training in teaching students to write. Allowing students to have a variety of writing tasks was mentioned 9 times during the interviews and 1 time during the focus group. Using ongoing means of assessment was most frequently mentioned. Of the 13 interviewees, 11 shared that ongoing assessment to evaluate writing would strengthen a writing program.

Research Question 2

What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing on evaluation of writing in a school system in western North Carolina?

Thirty-one teachers participated in the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing and Writing Orientation Scale surveys. Each survey had a 100% return rate. The mean and standard deviation for each survey question was also calculated. There were two areas measured on the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing survey, general and personal efficacy. Personal efficacy relates to the teacher’s

confidence in his or her ability to affect student learning. General efficacy relates to the external factors that affect the teacher's ability to teach. The level of a teacher's general efficacy relates to the belief the teacher has that he or she can overcome the environmental factors that disrupt student learning. Table 4 includes the responses for general efficacy questions. Survey Items 2, 4, 8, 11, 13, and 16 in Table 4 all relate to general efficacy. Survey Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15 from Table 5 all measure personal efficacy.

Table 4

Results of Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing Survey: General Efficacy Statements

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
2. Even a good writing teacher may not reach many students.	31	3.13	1.477
4. The hours in my class have little influence on students' writing performance compared to the influence of their home environment	30	4.13	1.358
8. If students are not disciplined a home, they are not likely to accept any discipline during the writing period.	30	3.90	.960
11. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her writing achievement.	30	4.10	.845
13. The amount a student can learn in writing is primarily related to family background.	30	4.17	1.206
16. If parents would do more in writing with their children, I could do more.	30	2.97	.999

With mean responses on statements 4, 11, and 13 of 4.13, 4.10 and 4.17, there is an indication that teachers believe that family life may have a greater influence on writing than time in class. With an average mean score of 2, teachers did not agree with statement 16 stating that "If parents would do more in writing with their children, I could do more." Table 5 presents the results of the personal efficacy statements on the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing Survey. Personal efficacy in this table relates

to the teacher’s confidence in his or her ability to affect student learning.

Table 5

Results of Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing Survey: Personal Efficacy Statements

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. When students' writing performance improves, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching the student.	31	4.42	1.148
3. If a student did not remember what I taught in a previous writing lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	31	4.48	.8902
5. If a student masters a new writing concept quickly, this is because I knew the necessary steps in teaching the concept.	30	4.23	.935
6. If I try really hard, I can help a student with the most difficult writing problem.	30	4.63	1.033
7. If a student does better than usual in writing, it is because I exerted a little extra effort.	30	3.37	1.066
9. When a student is having difficulty with a writing assignment, I would have no trouble adjusting it to his/her level.	30	4.63	.964
10. The influence of a students' home experience on writing can be overcome by good teaching.	30	4.33	.884
12. If one of my students could not do a writing assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	30	4.23	1.073
14. If a student becomes disruptive and noisy during writing time, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	30	4.97	.809
15. When students' writing performance improves, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.	29	4.45	1.021

Overall, teachers show relatively high perception of their ability to teach writing. On 9 of the 10 statements related to personal efficacy, the average response was greater than 4 indicating that their levels of agreement were between Somewhat Agree (SWA) to Agree (A). Only the average response on Statement 7 that addressed extra effort on the part of the teacher was low enough to be questionable on agreement.

The second survey used within this study was the Writing Orientation Scale. The Writing Orientation Scale was used to measure correct writing, direct instruction, and natural learning. The scale measured all three aspects of a teacher's beliefs and orientations towards the teaching of writing. Table 6 presents the results of the Writing Orientation Scale.

Table 6

Results of Writing Orientation Scale

	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	A good way to begin writing instruction is to have children copy good models of each particular type of writing.	31	3.45	1.670
2.	Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling.	31	4.68	1.194
3.	Teachers should aim at producing writers who can write good compositions in one draft.	30	2.83	1.206
4.	Being able to label words according to grammatical function (e.g., nouns, verbs) is useful in proficient writing.	31	4.23	1.117
5.	Before they begin a writing task, children who speak a nonstandard dialect of English should be reminded to use correct English.	31	3.58	1.205
6.	It is important for children to study words in order to learn their spelling.	31	4.48	1.363
7.	Formal instruction in writing is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in writing.	31	5.06	.727
8.	Children need to practice writing letters to learn how to form them correctly.	31	5.35	.798
9.	It is important to teach children strategies for planning and revising.	31	5.71	.461
10.	Instead of regular grammar lessons, it is best to teach grammar when a specific need for it emerges in a child’s writing.	31	3.39	1.520
11.	With practice in writing and responding to written messages, children will gradually learn the conventions of adult writing.	31	4.29	1.006
12.	Students need to meet frequently in small groups to react and critique each other’s writing.	31	4.81	1.046
13.	The act of composing is more important than the written work children produce.	31	3.58	1.089

Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 depict the participant responses collected for the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing and the Writing Orientation Scale that were administered in

January 2009. Appendix G and H include the number of teacher responses for each statement.

Appendix I present the responses received for each of the 13 items from the Writing Orientation Scale. The tables present the data for each of the three parts of the survey.

Items 1-5 are Part 1 of the Writing Orientation Scale. These items are used to address the teacher's beliefs in the level in which students need to write correctly. Items 6-9 are Part 2 of the Writing Orientation Scale. These items are used to measure the direct instruction of the teacher. Items 10-13 make up Part 3 of the scale. The items within this section address natural learning concerning writing. Table 7 presents the cross tabulation of teacher responses on Items 4 and 11 on the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing.

Table 7

Cross Tabulation of Statements 4 and 11 on Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing

Statements		11. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her writing achievement.				
		SWD	SWA	A	SA	Total
4. The hours in my class have little influence on students' writing performance compared to the influence of their home environment.	SD	1	0	0	0	1
	D	1	2	0	0	3
	SWD	2	4	0	0	6
	SWA	0	3	1	1	5
	A	2	6	3	0	11
	SA	1	0	2	1	4
	Total	7	15	6	2	30

Both Statements 4 and 11 of the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing focused on the effects of the home environment on student writing success. Of the 30 survey responses, 11 participants Agreed (A) with Statement 4. Fifteen responders Somewhat Agreed (SWA) with Statement 11. The responses given by the teachers showed that most teachers either Somewhat Agreed (SWA) or Agreed (A) with both statements. Table 8 presents a cross tabulation of the teacher responses for Statements 9 and 12 on the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing.

Table 8

Cross Tabulation of Statements 9 and 12 on Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing

Statements		9. When a student is having difficulty with a writing assignment, I would have no trouble adjusting it to his/her level.					
		D	SWD	SWA	A	SA	Total
12. If one of my students could not do a writing assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	D	0	1	0	2	0	3
	SWD	0	0	1	2	0	3
	SWA	1	1	4	2	2	10
	A	0	0	3	7	2	12
	SA	0	0	1	0	1	2
	Total	1	2	9	13	5	30

Table 8 presents the cross tabulation of Statements 9 and 12. These statements both assessed the teacher's ability to assess student needs and modify instruction to meet those needs. The responses given, show that 12 of 30 responders Agree (A) with Statements 12, and 13 of 30 Agree (A) with Statement 9. Both statements had similar responses. Table 9 shows a cross tabulation of the teacher responses for Items 11 and 14 on the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing.

Table 9

Cross Tabulation of Statements 11 and 14 on Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing

Statements		(14)If a student becomes disruptive and noisy during writing time, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.				
		SWD	SWA	A	SA	Total
(11)A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her writing achievement.	SWD	0	2	5	0	7
	SWA	0	4	6	5	15
	A	1	1	2	2	6
	SA	0	0	1	1	2
	Total	1	7	14	8	30

Both statements in Table 9 deal with misbehavior within the writing class and the ability that the teacher has to modify the behavior. The greatest number of responders to Statement 11 chose Somewhat Agree (SWA). Of 30 surveyed teachers, 15 chose this response. Fourteen of 30 surveyed teachers chose Agree (A). This response was significantly higher than the other responses to the statement. Table 10 presents the results of a cross tabulation of the teacher responses for Statements 2 and 6 on the Writing Orientation Scale.

Table 10

Cross Tabulation of Statements 2 and 6 on Writing Orientation Scale

Statements		6. It is important for children to study words in order to learn their spelling						
		SD	D	SWD	SWA	A	SA	Total
2. Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling.	D	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
	SWD	0	0	0	2	1	1	4
	SWA	0	0	0	1	2	1	4
	A	2	0	2	3	5	1	13
	SA	0	1	0	0	3	4	8
	Total	2	1	2	8	11	7	31

Both of the statements from Table 10 target spelling in the teaching of writing. Thirteen of the 30 responders to Statement 2 Agree (A) that “Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling.” This is similar to the 11 surveyed teachers who also responded with Agree (A) that “It is important for children to study words in order to learn their spelling.” Table 11 presents a cross tabulation of the teacher responses for Statements 3 and 9 on the Writing Orientation Scale.

Table 11

Cross Tabulation of Statements 3 and 9 on Writing Orientation Scale

Statements		9. It is important to teach children strategies for planning and revising.		
		A	SA	Total
3. Teachers should aim at producing writers who can write good compositions in one draft.	SD	0	4	4
	D	4	4	8
	SWD	2	9	11
	SWA	1	2	3
	A	1	3	4
	Total	8	22	30

The data for Table 11 show the responses for Statements 3 and 9 of the Writing Orientation Scale. Both statements deal with the writing process. Statement 3 had 11 teachers who Somewhat Disagreed (SWD) with teaching students to write a good composition in one draft. This fits with the 22 who responded to Statement 9 that they Strongly Agree (SA) that children should be taught strategies for planning and revising.

Research Question 3

How do the ratings of locally-scored writing assessments compare to state-scored writing assessments?

Table 12 shows the number of students for each of the 13 elementary schools at each achievement level for the 2008 North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment.

Table 12

Number of Students at Each Achievement Level

School	N Tested	N Passed	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
A	26	20	1	5	20	0
B	47	31	2	14	31	0
C	66	42	3	21	41	1
D	113	67	10	36	63	4
E	46	28	2	16	27	1
F	44	28	2	14	27	1
G	93	65	7	21	62	3
H	66	46	0	20	43	3
I	41	27	0	14	26	1
J	40	16	4	20	16	0
K	46	14	2	30	14	0
L	26	17	2	7	17	0
M	61	49	0	12	45	4

The data show that writing scores across the district have a range of percent of proficiency of 49.89%. The data also show that 450 of 715 students (62.94%) reached proficiency levels of 3 or 4.

During the 2007-2008 school year, two locally-administered county-wide writing assessments were given to the fourth grade students. These assessments were scored by the classroom teacher using the state-supplied fourth-grade writing-assessment rubric. In March 2008, the same students also participated in the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment. North Carolina outsourced the scoring of the state writing assessment to a professional,

private company. The schools received the results of the state assessment in May 2008.

To form the sample group, in January 2009, the data from the locally-administered assessments and the state assessment from the 2007-2008 school year were collected and placed on a roster. Participants to be placed on the roster were selected by choosing every third student from the present fifth grade. It was determined at that time, that some of the data were incomplete for three of the schools. Therefore, those schools were no longer part of the study group.

All information for the study was available from schools: B, C, D, G, H, I, J, K, L and M. Partial data were available for schools: A and E. No information was available for School F. Initially 130 students would be the participants within the study. With School F reporting no individual school data and Schools A and E with limited reported data, 100 students from 10 elementary schools created the new data set. Tables 13 through 32 display the individual writing results from the two locally-administered and scored writing assessments and the final North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment. The first table for each school shows the scores the sample students from each school received on both locally-administered and

scored writing assessments given in October and December and on the final March assessment.

The second table for each school is a breakdown of the content and conventions scores the sample students received on the December assessment compared to the March assessment. Symbols are used to identify a change from the December assessment to the March assessment, and increase (+) and a decrease (-), or no change (0) in both content and conventions. Receiving either a (+) or a (0) symbol identifies either an improvement in writing (+) or no change (0). Only the (0) indicates an exact match in scoring practice. Table 13 displays the data for School B's writing scores for the October and December locally-administered writing assessment and the North Carolina Writing Assessment given in March.

Table 13

School B Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
B1	8	0	II	12	2	III	8	4	III
B2	4	2	I	8	2	II	10	4	III
B3	8	0	II	8	0	II	8	4	III
B4	12	2	III	16	4	IV	8	4	III
B5	8	0	II	8	2	II	6	2	II
B6	8	0	II	8	0	II	8	2	II
B7	8	0	II	12	0	III	8	1	II
B8	8	2	II	12	2	III	8	4	III
B9	8	2	II	12	2	III	8	4	III
B10	12	4	III	12	4	III	10	4	III

Table 13 shows the scores for all three writing samples for students in School B. Comparing only October to December scores, 6 of 10 (60%) students showed an increase in scores while the other 4 students (40%) only maintained their scores in the area of content. For conventions, only 3 of 10 students (30%) showed an increase in their convention scores while 7 of 10 students (70%) maintained their October scores. Proficiency Levels were either maintained or increased for 7 of 10 students (70%) between the October and December administration. Only 3 of 10 students (30%) were scored the same on both assessments. The overall percent proficient for the sample population of School B was 70% as measured by the North Carolina Writing

Test. This proficiency level is higher than the school's overall writing proficiency of 65.9%. Table 14 presents the findings for School B for content and conventions on the December and March writing assessments.

Table 14

School B 2007-2008 Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Writing Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
B1	M	12	8	-	2	4	+	III	III	0
B2	M	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
B3	F	8	8	0	0	4	+	II	III	+
B4	F	16	8	-	4	4	0	IV	III	-
B5	M	8	6	-	2	2	0	II	II	0
B6	F	8	8	0	0	2	+	II	II	0
B7	M	12	8	-	0	1	+	III	II	-
B8	M	12	8	-	2	4	+	III	III	0
B9	F	12	8	-	2	4	+	III	III	0
B10	F	12	10	-	4	4	0	III	III	0

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 14 clearly shows the comparison of content and conventions scores from the December and March assessments. Out of the 10 sample students from School B, 7 students (70%) had lower content scores on the March assessment than on the December assessment with only 2 students (20%) maintaining the December marks and 1 student (10%) showing an increase. This is a 20% exact accuracy rate for scoring on content when compared to the scores for the March

assessment. In contrast to the content scores, the conventions score of these students also showed a 30% match on the ratings. The conventions scores were consistently higher in March than in December with 7 of 10 students (70%) demonstrating an increased score. These data show that while the scorers from school B scored the students higher on their content, they underscored the students when compared to the scoring by the State on the March Assessment. Despite the discrepancy in scoring the content, there was still an 80% accuracy rate in the overall assessment of each student's proficiency level.

When reviewing the Table 13 and Table 14 data, it is evident that ratings for the October writing sample and the March writing sample are more consistent than the December March comparisons related to content and are less consistent with conventions and proficiency levels. This is supported by a 60% accuracy rate on content, only a 10% accuracy rate for conventions, but a 50% match rate for proficiency level. Table 15 presents the writing assessment data for School C for the October, December, and March administrations of the writing assessment.

Table 15

School C Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
C1	4	2	I	4	2	I	8	4	III
C2	8	2	II	8	4	II	8	4	III
C3	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	4	III
C4	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	4	III
C5	8	2	II	8	2	II	10	4	III
C6	8	0	II	8	0	II	6	2	II
C7	4	2	I	8	2	II	10	3	III
C8	8	2	II	8	0	II	8	2	II
C9	NS	2	I	4	2	I	8	2	II
C10	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	4	III

Comparing October to December assessments for content, conventions, and proficiency levels, the data show that between October and December the rate of agreement for this school is high. For content, 8 of 9 students (88.88%) were scored identically with one student receiving a higher score and one student not having a score in October to compare. For convention scores, 8 of 10 students (80%) maintained the same rating and one student (10%) scored higher and one (10%) lower in December compared to October. With respect to proficiency levels, student ratings were at 90% agreement with 9 of 10 students (90%) maintaining their score and one student (10%) receiving a higher score.

Table 16 presents the data between December and March for School C.

Table 16

School C 2007-2008 Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Writing Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
C1	F	4	8	+	2	4	+	I	III	+
C2	F	8	8	0	4	4	0	II	III	+
C3	M	8	8	0	2	4	+	II	III	+
C4	F	8	8	0	2	4	+	II	III	+
C5	F	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
C6	M	8	6	-	0	2	0	II	II	0
C7	M	8	10	+	2	3	+	II	III	+
C8	M	8	8	0	0	2	+	II	II	0
C9	F	4	8	+	2	2	0	I	II	+
C10	F	8	8	0	2	4	+	II	III	+

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 16 shows that 5 of 10 students (50%) maintained their content scores between the December and March writing samples and 4 of 10 (40%) increased their content scores leaving only 1 student (10%) who showed a decrease in score. With respect to maintenance or improvement in writing, 9 of 10 students (90%) either maintained or increased their score in content. Conventions scores between December and March showed only a 30% exact match in agreement and that 70% of the students scored higher in conventions in March than in December. Proficiency levels

reflect the same trend as convention scores with 2 of 10 students (20%) maintaining the same proficiency level and 8 of 10 (80%) showing an improvement in their proficiency levels.

Comparing data from Tables 15 and 16 for a comprehensive look at writing improvement, 9 of 10 students (90%) increased their proficiency levels, 8 of 10 (80%) improved their conventions score, and 8 of 10 (80%) either maintained or improved their content scores. For School C, the 70% proficiency rate for the sample overstates the proficiency rate for the school of 65.64%. Table 17 presents the writing data for School D.

Table 17

School D Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
D1	10	2	III	10	1	II	8	0	II
D2	15	4	IV	12	3	III	12	3	III
D3	16	4	IV	12	4	III	16	4	IV
D4	15	4	IV	10	2	II	8	2	II
D5	10	4	III	16	2	IV	12	3	III
D6	11	2	III	12	2	III	8	2	II
D7	16	4	IV	12	1	III	8	4	III
D8	6	0	I	8	0	II	4	0	I
D9	7	2	II	6	1	I	8	4	III
D10	6	2	II	7	1	II	8	2	II

Table 17 shows the scores for all three writing samples for students in School D. Comparing only October to December scores, 4 of 10 students (40%) showed an increase in content scores, 5 of 10 students (50%) showed a decrease in scores, and 1 student (10%) remained the same. For conventions scores, 9 of 10 students (90%) showed a decrease in conventions score from October to December and only 1 student's score (10%) remained the same. The overall percent proficient for the sample population of School D was 50% as measured by the North Carolina Writing Assessment. The sample proficiency rate is lower than the school's percent proficiency rate of 59.2%. Table 18 presents the comparison between the content and conventions scores for the December and March assessments for School D.

Table 18

School D 2007-2008 Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Assessments Writing Assessment

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
D1	M	10	8	-	1	0	-	II	II	0
D2	M	12	12	0	3	3	0	III	III	0
D3	M	12	16	+	4	4	0	III	IV	+
D4	F	10	8	-	2	2	0	II	II	0
D5	F	16	12	-	2	3	+	IV	III	-
D6	F	12	8	-	2	2	0	III	II	-
D7	F	12	8	-	1	4	+	III	III	0
D8	F	8	4	+	0	0	0	II	I	-
D9	F	6	8	+	1	4	+	I	III	+
D10	M	7	8	-	1	2	+	II	II	0

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 18 shows the comparison of content and conventions scores from the December to March assessment. Out of the 10 sample students from School D, 6 students (60%) had lower content scores on the March assessment than on the December assessment with only 1 student (10%) maintaining the December score and 3 students (30%) showing an increase. This is a 10% exact match for scoring on content when compared to the scorer for the March assessment. However, there is a 50% match when comparing the conventions score of the sample students on the December and March assessments. The conventions scores were more consistent with 5 of 10 scores (50%) remaining

the same and 4 (40%) showing an increased score. This shows an exact match in overall scoring of 50% when determining the student's proficiency levels.

When reviewing Table 17 and Table 18 data, it is evident that the ratings for the December to March assessment were much more consistent when comparing conventions scores but less consistent when comparing content scores. This can be supported by the 50% accuracy rate in scoring conventions, only a 40% accuracy rate in scoring content, but a 50% match rate for proficiency level. Overall, the data show that 7 of 10 students (70%) in the sample either maintained or improved their writing scores compared to only 59.29% proficient in the school population. Table 19 presents the writing assessment data for School G for the October, December, and March administrations of the writing assessment.

Table 19

School G Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
G1	12	2	III	12	2	III	8	4	III
G2	8	2	II	8	2	II	6	4	II
G3	12	2	III	12	2	III	10	4	III
G4	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	4	III
G5	8	4	III	4	2	I	4	2	I
G6	4	0	I	4	0	I	6	0	I
G7	8	2	II	8	0	II	10	2	III
G8	8	0	II	8	0	II	6	4	II
G9	12	2	III	12	2	III	10	4	III
G10	12	4	III	12	4	III	10	4	III

Comparing October to December assessments for content, conventions, and proficiency levels, the data show that between October and December the rate of agreement for the school shows a high level of agreement in scoring for content, conventions, and overall proficiency. For content, 9 of 10 students (90%) remained the same with 1 student (10%) showing a decrease. For convention scores, 8 of 10 students (80%) remained the same and 2 (20%) showed a decrease. With respect to proficiency levels, student ratings were within 90% agreement with 9 of 10 students (90%) maintaining their level and 1 student (10%) receiving a lower level. The data for Table 20 show a comparison of the content and conventions scores between the December and March writing assessments.

Table 20

School G 2007-2008 Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Writing Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
G1	F	12	8	-	2	4	+	III	III	0
G2	M	8	6	-	2	4	+	II	II	0
G3	M	12	10	-	2	4	+	III	III	0
G4	F	8	8	0	2	4	+	II	III	+
G5	F	4	4	0	2	2	0	I	I	0
G6	M	4	6	+	0	0	0	I	I	0
G7	F	8	10	+	0	2	+	II	III	+
G8	M	8	6	-	0	4	+	II	II	0
G9	F	12	10	-	2	4	+	III	III	0
G10	M	12	10	-	4	4	+	III	III	0

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 20 shows that 2 of 10 students (20%) maintained their content scores between December and March writing samples and 2 of 10 (20%) increased their content scores leaving 6 students (60%) with a decrease in score. This would show an exact agreement of 20% in scoring. For the conventions scores, 2 of 10 (20%) students maintained their score from December to March and the remaining 8 (80%) showed an increase. Conventions scores between December and March showed that 80% of the students increased their scores while only 2 of 10 students (20%) maintained their rating. Proficiency levels between the December and March assessments show an 80% match with 2 of 10 students (20%)

increasing their level and the remaining 8 of 10 (80%) maintaining their same rating.

Comparing data from Tables 19 and 20, shows a greater match in scoring content, conventions, and proficiency level between the December and March assessments. The data show that School D's sample proficiency rate of 60% was lower than School D's population rate of 69.89%. Table 21 presents the writing data for School H.

Table 21

School H Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
H1	4	0	I	8	0	II	8	1	II
H2	8	2	II	4	2	I	8	4	III
H3	8	0	II	8	2	II	8	2	II
H4	8	4	III	8	2	II	8	4	III
H5	8	0	II	8	2	II	10	4	III
H6	8	4	III	8	4	III	10	4	III
H7	8	2	II	8	2	II	10	4	III
H8	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	2	II
H9	8	2	II	8	4	III	8	4	III
H10	8	2	II	8	2	II	10	4	III

Table 21 shows the scores for all three writing samples for students in School H. Comparing only October to December scores, 8 of 10 students (80%) maintained their content scores, 1 student (10%) showed an increase and 1 of 10 students (10%) showed a decrease. For conventions, 6 of

10 students (60%) maintained their scores, 3 students (30%) showed an increase, and 1 student (10%) showed a decrease. Proficiency levels of 6 of 10 students (60%) remained the same, 2 students (20%) showed an increase, and 2 students (20%) showed a decrease. The overall proficiency rate for School H was 70%. This proficiency level is similar to the school's overall proficiency of 69.70%. Table 22 presents the content and conventions data for School H on the December and March writing assessments.

Table 22

School H 2007-2008 Writing Assessment Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
H1	M	8	8	0	0	1	+	II	II	0
H2	F	4	8	+	2	4	+	I	III	+
H3	F	8	8	0	2	2	0	II	II	0
H4	F	8	8	0	2	4	+	II	III	+
H5	F	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
H6	M	8	10	+	4	4	0	III	III	0
H7	M	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
H8	M	8	8	0	2	2	0	II	II	0
H9	F	8	8	0	4	4	0	III	III	0
H10	M	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 22 shows the comparison of content and conventions scores from December and March assessments. Out of the 10 sample students from School H, 5 (50%)

maintained their content score while 5 (50%) showed an increase. This shows that 100% of the scores received for content between the December and March assessments either remained the same or increased. The conventions scores reflect a lower level of accuracy with 40% agreement between the two assessments. For the overall proficiency rate, 5 of 10 students (50%) maintained their proficiency level and the remaining 5 students (50%) showed an increase.

When reviewing the data from Table 21 and Table 22, it is evident that there is a greater agreement between scoring on the December and March assessments than between the October and December assessments. Scores on content, conventions, and proficiency level were consistent between the two assessments. Table 23 gives the writing assessment data for School I for the October, December, and March administrations of the writing assessment.

Table 23

School I Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
I1	4	0	I	4	0	I	8	2	II
I2	12	4	III	8	4	III	10	4	III
I3	12	4	III	8	2	II	12	4	III
I4	4	2	I	8	4	III	8	4	III
I5	8	0	II	4	2	I	8	2	II
I6	8	0	II	12	0	III	10	4	III
I7	12	4	III	16	4	IV	14	4	IV
I8	8	4	III	12	4	III	12	4	III
I9	4	2	I	8	4	III	8	4	III
I10	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	4	III

Comparing October to December assessments for content, conventions, and proficiency levels, the data show that between October and December the rate of agreement for this school is inconsistent. For content, 2 of 10 students (20%) received the same score, 5 students (50%) showed an increase in scores, and 3 of 10 students (30%) showed a decrease. For conventions, 6 of 10 students (60%) maintained their scores, 3 students (30%) received higher scores, and 1 student (10%) received a lower score. With respect to proficiency levels, 4 of 10 students (40%) received the same proficiency level, 4 of 10 students (40%) showed an increase in proficiency level and 2 students (20%) received a lower proficiency level. There was a 40%

agreement when comparing the proficiency levels the sample students received in October and December. Table 24 presents the data between December and March for School I.

Table 24

School I 2007-2008 Writing Assessment Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
I1	M	4	8	+	0	2	+	I	II	+
I2	M	8	10	+	4	4	0	III	III	0
I3	F	8	12	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
I4	F	8	8	0	4	4	0	III	III	0
I5	M	4	8	+	2	2	0	I	II	+
I6	M	12	10	-	0	4	+	III	III	0
I7	F	16	14	-	4	4	0	IV	IV	0
I8	F	12	12	0	4	4	0	III	III	0
I9	M	8	8	0	4	4	0	III	III	0
I10	F	8	8	0	2	4	+	II	III	+

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 24 shows that 4 of 10 students (40%) maintained content scores between December and March, 4 of 10 students (40%) showed higher content scores and only 2 students (20%) showed lower content scores. For the conventions scores between December and March, 6 of 10 students (60%) maintained their scores and the remaining 4 students (40%) showed an increase. In respect to proficiency level, 6 of 10 students (60%) remained the same and the remaining 4 students (40%) showed an increase. This shows a 60% match

in scoring overall proficiency level between December and March.

A comparison of data from Table 23 and 24 show that there is a higher level of agreement between the December and March ratings of the sample students. Conventions and overall proficiency levels both showed a 60% agreement in rating the writing samples. The percent proficient for the sample students from School I was 80%. This is higher than the schools' percent proficient of 65.8%. Table 25 presents the writing data for School J.

Table 25

School J Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
J1	4	2	I	4	0	I	8	0	II
J2	7	0	I	10	0	II	8	0	II
J3	11	2	III	9	2	II	8	2	II
J4	10	2	III	11	0	II	8	0	II
J5	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	2	II
J6	10	4	III	8	2	II	10	2	III
J7	14	4	IV	13	2	III	12	4	III
J8	9	2	II	10	0	II	8	2	II
J9	8	4	III	12	2	III	10	2	III
J10	10	2	III	11	0	II	10	3	III

Comparing October to December writing assessments in Table 25 for School J, the data for content show that 2 of 10 students (20%) maintained their score, 5 of 10 students (50%) showed higher content scores with 3 students (30%)

showing a decrease. This shows an exact agreement between scorers of 20%. When comparing conventions scores between the 2 assessments, 3 of 10 students (30%) remained the same and the remaining 7 students (70%) showed a decrease in conventions score. The agreement in scoring for conventions was only 30%. Table 26 presents the data for School J between the December and March assessments.

Table 26

School J 2007-2008 Writing Assessment Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
J1	F	4	8	+	0	0	0	I	II	+
J2	M	10	8	-	0	0	0	II	II	0
J3	M	9	8	-	2	2	0	II	II	0
J4	M	11	8	-	0	0	0	II	II	0
J5	M	8	8	0	2	2	0	II	II	0
J6	M	8	10	+	2	2	0	II	III	+
J7	F	13	12	-	2	4	+	III	III	0
J8	F	10	8	-	0	2	+	II	II	0
J9	F	12	10	-	2	2	0	III	III	0
J10	M	11	10	-	0	3	+	II	III	+

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

When analyzing the content for School J in Table 26, 1 of 10 students (10%) maintained the content score, 2 students (20%) increased in the area of content and 7 of 10 students (70%) showed a decrease. This was a low level of agreement in scoring content. In contrast, 7 of 10 students (70%) remained the same in the area of conventions

and the remaining 3 students (30%) showed an increase. This showed an exact agreement of 70% in rating between the December and March assessments. When determining the level of agreement for overall proficiency, there is also a 70% exact agreement between scoring.

Comparing the data from Table 25 and 26 show that there is a greater agreement in scoring for conventions and overall proficiency between the December and March assessments. There was little agreement between the content scoring when comparing the two tables. When determining the overall proficiency level of the students, the percent proficient of the sample students from School J was 40%. This proficiency level reflects the school's overall percent proficient of 40%. Table 27 presents the data for School K.

Table 27

School K Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
K1	8	4	III	8	4	III	8	4	III
K2	8	0	II	8	4	III	10	2	III
K3	4	4	II	8	4	III	6	2	II
K4	4	4	II	6	4	II	8	2	II
K5	4	0	I	2	0	I	8	1	II
K6	8	4	III	8	4	III	8	2	II
K7	4	0	I	6	0	I	8	2	II
K8	4	4	II	6	4	II	8	2	II
K9	4	0	I	4	0	I	8	0	II
K10	4	4	II	4	4	II	8	2	II

When comparing data for School K in Table 27 for content between the October and December assessments, 5 of 10 students (50%) maintained their score, 4 students (40%) increased their score, and the remaining 1 student (10%) showed a decrease in score. This shows an exact match in scoring of 50%. Upon analyzing the conventions scores between the October and December writing assessments, 9 of 10 students (90%) maintained their conventions scores and only 1 student (10%) showed an increase. These data show an exact agreement in scoring conventions between the 2 assessments of 90%. Table 28 presents data for school K for the December and March assessments by comparing the content, conventions, and overall proficiency.

Table 28

School K 2007-2008 Writing Assessment Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level	Prof. Level	Δ
K1	F	8	8	0	4	4	0	III	III	0
K2	M	8	10	+	4	2	-	III	III	0
K3	M	8	6	-	4	2	-	III	II	-
K4	F	6	8	+	4	2	-	II	II	0
K5	M	2	8	+	0	1	+	I	II	+
K6	F	8	8	0	4	2	-	III	II	-
K7	F	6	8	+	0	2	+	I	II	+
K8	F	6	8	+	4	2	-	II	II	0
K9	M	4	8	+	0	0	0	I	II	+
K10	M	4	8	+	4	2	-	II	II	0

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

The data presented in Table 28 clearly show a higher level of agreement in scoring on content than on conventions between the December and March writing assessments. For School K's sample students, 2 of 10 students (20%) maintained content scores, 7 of 10 students (70%) showed an increase, and only 1 student (10%) showed a decrease. This shows an exact agreement in scoring of 20%. In contrast, 2 of 10 students (20%) remained the same, 2 students (20%) showed an increase, and the remaining 6 students (60%) showed decreased scores for conventions. This shows a match for scoring conventions of 20%. When determining the agreement of overall proficiency, 5 of 10 students (50%) maintained their proficiency, 3 students

(30%) increased their proficiency level and the remaining 2 students (20%) showed a decrease in proficiency level.

When comparing data from Table 27 and Table 28 it is clear that agreement in scoring is higher for content in both tables. The agreement for scoring conventions is low in both tables. The overall proficiency of the sample students was 20%. The overall proficiency of School K as a whole was 29.79%. Table 29 presents the data for School L for the October, December, and March writing assessments.

Table 29

School L Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
L1	12	2	III	12	4	III	8	4	III
L2	8	4	III	12	4	III	10	4	III
L3	12	2	III	8	2	II	12	2	III
L4	8	2	II	12	2	III	8	1	II
L5	4	2	I	8	2	II	12	4	III
L6	8	2	II	8	2	II	10	4	III
L7	8	2	II	8	2	II	8	4	III
L8	4	4	II	8	2	II	10	4	III
L9	8	2	II	8	4	III	12	4	III
L10	8	2	II	12	2	III	10	4	III

The data for School L in Table 29 show that when analyzing the content scores for the October and December assessments, 4 of 10 students (40%) maintained their scores, 5 of 10 (50%) showed an increase, and 1 student (10%) showed a decrease. This shows an exact agreement of

40% in scoring between the October and December assessments. When analyzing the conventions scores between the 2 assessments, 7 of 10 students (70%) remained the same, 2 of 10 (20%) increased their score, and 1 student (10%) showed a decrease. This shows an exact match in agreement in scoring of 70% in March. The percent proficient for the sample students for School L was 90% in March. This is significantly higher than the schools' percent proficient of 65.3%. Table 30 presents the data for School L for the December and March assessments by breaking down the content, conventions, and overall proficiency between the two assessments.

Table 30

School L 2007-2008 Writing Assessment Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level Dec.	Prof. Level March	Δ
L1	F	12	8	-	4	4	0	III	III	0
L2	M	12	10	-	4	4	0	III	III	0
L3	F	8	12	+	2	2	0	II	III	+
L4	M	12	8	-	2	1	-	III	II	-
L5	M	8	12	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
L6	M	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
L7	M	8	8	0	2	4	+	II	III	+
L8	F	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+
L9	M	8	12	+	4	4	0	III	III	0
L10	F	12	10	-	2	4	+	III	III	0

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 30 data show that when comparing the content for School L between the December and March assessments, that 1 of 10 students (10%) had a score that remained the same, 5 of 10 (50%) showed an increase and the remaining 4 (40%) showed a decrease. This shows an exact agreement in scoring for content of 10%. When comparing the scores for conventions, 4 of 10 students (40%) maintained their score, 5 of 10 (50%) showed an increase, and only 1 student (10%) showed a decrease. This shows a match in agreement in scoring conventions between the December and March assessments of 40%. When determining the agreement of the overall proficiency level, 4 of 10 students (40%) maintained their proficiency, 5 of 10 (50%) showed an

increase, and 1 student (10%) showed a decrease in proficiency level. This shows an exact agreement of determining proficiency level of 40%.

When comparing the data from Table 29 and Table 30, it is clear that there is a greater agreement of scoring content between the October and December assessments than the December and March assessments. Table 31 presents the data for School M for the October, December, and March writing assessments.

Table 31

School M Writing Assessment Data 2007-2008

Stud	Oct. Q1 Con.	Oct. Q1 Conv.	Prof. Level	Dec. Q2 Con.	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Prof. Level	Mar. EOY Con.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Prof. Level
M1	12	2	III	8	0	II	8	4	III
M2	4	2	I	4	0	I	8	4	III
M3	4	2	I	4	0	I	10	4	III
M4	4	0	I	4	2	I	8	2	II
M5	12	4	III	12	4	III	10	4	III
M6	12	4	III	12	4	III	14	4	IV
M7	4	4	II	4	0	I	4	4	II
M8	16	2	IV	12	4	III	12	4	III
M9	16	2	IV	12	4	III	8	4	III
M10	4	0	I	8	2	II	10	4	III

Table 31 shows that when comparing the content scores for School M for the October and December writing assessments, that 6 of 10 students (60%) maintained their scores, 1 student (10%) showed an increase, and the

remaining 3 students (30%) showed a decrease. This shows an agreement in scoring content of 60%. For the conventions scores, 2 of 10 students (20%) maintained their scores, 4 of 10 (40%) showed an increase, and the remaining 4 showed a decrease (40%). This is an agreement of scoring of 20%. The percent proficient for the sample students from School M was 80%. The school as a whole proficiency on the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment was close at 80.3%. Table 32 presents the data for School M for the December and March writing assessments. It compares the content, conventions, and overall proficiency for both assessments.

Table 32

School M 2007-2008 Writing Assessment Content and Conventions Comparison on December and March Assessments

Stud	M/F	Dec. Q2 Con.	Mar. EOY Con.	Δ	Dec. Q2 Conv.	Mar. EOY Conv.	Δ	Prof. Level Dec.	Prof. Level March	Δ
M1	M	8	8	0	0	4	+	II	III	+
M2	F	4	8	+	0	4	+	I	III	+
M3	M	4	10	+	0	4	+	I	III	+
M4	M	4	8	+	2	2	0	I	II	+
M5	M	12	10	-	4	4	0	III	III	0
M6	F	12	14	+	4	4	0	III	IV	+
M7	F	4	4	0	0	4	+	I	II	+
M8	F	12	12	0	4	4	0	III	III	0
M9	M	12	8	-	4	4	0	III	III	0
M10	F	8	10	+	2	4	+	II	III	+

Note. The M/F identifies a male or female sample student. The Δ represents an increase, decrease, or no change in score.

Table 32 shows that 3 of 10 students (30%) from School M maintained their content scores, 5 of 10 (50%) showed an increase, and 2 students (20%) showed a decrease in score. This shows a match in scoring of 30%. In contrast, when comparing the conventions scores, 5 of 10 students (50%) maintained their scores and the remaining 5 (50%) showed an increase. This shows an exact match in scoring for conventions of 50%. Similarly, 3 of 10 students (30%) maintained their overall proficiency level and the remaining 7 (70%) showed an increase in overall proficiency. This shows a match in scoring overall proficiency of 30%.

When comparing the data from Table 31 and Table 32, there is a greater level of agreement between the December and March assessments than the October and December assessments. Table 33 presents the data for the differences in scores for content received between the December and March assessments.

Table 33

Difference in December and March Content

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-8	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	-4	12	11.9	11.9	12.9
	-3	1	1.0	1.0	13.9
	-2	19	18.8	18.8	32.7
	-1	3	3.0	3.0	35.6
	0	27	26.7	26.7	62.4
	1	1	1.0	1.0	63.4
	2	20	19.8	19.8	83.2
	4	15	14.9	14.9	98.0
	6	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

The table shows that there is a 26.7% agreement on content scores. It also shows that when looking at a -1 and 2 point difference in the ratings, the percentages go to 30.7% and 69.3% respectively. Table 34 shows the data for the differences in scores for conventions received between the December and March assessments.

Table 34

Difference in December and March Conventions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-2	6	5.9	5.9	5.9
	-1	2	2.0	2.0	7.9
	0	41	40.6	40.6	48.5
	1	6	5.9	5.9	54.5
	2	36	35.6	35.6	90.1
	3	3	3.0	3.0	93.1
	4	7	6.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

The conventions data in Table 34 show that 40.6% agree and approximately 48.5% agree within 1 point and 90.1% agree within 2 points. Approximately 7.9% scored lower in conventions below the State conventions score. Table 35 presents the data for the differences in proficiency levels between the December and March writing assessments.

Table 35

Difference in December and March Proficiency Levels

Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	-1	8	7.9	7.9	7.9
	0	52	51.5	51.5	59.4
	1	36	35.6	35.6	95.0
	2	5	5	5.0	100.0
	Total	101	101	100.0	

Table 35 shows that when analyzing the proficiency levels, the data show that 51.5% matched perfectly and approximately 95% matched within 1 proficiency level. The data show that 7.9% was rated below the State level.

During the 2008-2009 school year, the state began to pilot a new writing assessment. Within this new writing assessment, students in the fourth grade participated in four writing tasks. Two of the tasks were content-area writing and the other two were on-demand writing assessments. These writing assessments were scored by two fourth-grade teachers within the county. The first on-demand assessment was administered in December 2008. The students were scored using the state-supplied rubric that consists of both a features and conventions component (Appendix J and K). The features rubric included the same criteria as the previously used content rubric. No changes were made in the conventions rubric used during 2007-2008 or for the 2008-2009 on-demand writing assessments. Tables 36 and 37 show the difference in scoring between the two scorers using the features and conventions rubrics.

Table 36

Difference in Scoring Features

Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	-2.00	10	1.3	1.3	1.3
	-1.00	152	19.2	19.4	20.7
	.00	401	50.6	51.2	71.9
	1.00	196	24.7	25.0	96.9
	2.00	24	3.0	3.1	100.0
	Total	783	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	9	1.1		
Total		792	100.0		

Table 36 shows that 51.2% of the scorers matched perfectly when scoring for features and 95.6% matched within ±1.0 points. Table 37 presents the differences in scoring between the two scorers using the North Carolina conventions rubric. The conventions rubric determines the student's ability level in using grammatical conventions correctly.

Table 37

Difference in Scoring Conventions

Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	-2.00	3	.4	.4	.4
	-1.00	139	17.6	17.6	18.0
	.00	434	54.8	54.9	72.8
	1.00	194	24.5	24.5	97.3
	2.00	21	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	791	99.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		792	100.0		

Table 37 shows that 54.9% of the scorers matched perfectly when scoring using the conventions rubric and 96.9% matched within ±1 point. This supports the notion of more professional development training for applying rubrics.

Summary

Through the use of the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing and the Writing Orientation Scale, survey data were collected from the fourth-grade teachers in a school system

in western North Carolina. Data were also collected from 13 elementary schools through two locally-administered writing assessments and the state writing assessment administered during the 2007-2008 school year. Additional data were collected through 13 individual teacher interviews and a focus group. During the 2008-2009 school year, data were collected through an on-demand writing assessment administered in December 2008.

Chapter 5: Results, Conclusions, and Implications for Future Research

Introduction

The ability for students to be able to write is essential to being productive in society. The ability to express oneself is crucial both in and out of the classroom. Writing can be found in all aspects of daily life. In order to become proficient at expressing oneself, one must be exposed to a variety of writing tasks and experiences.

This study was an examination of the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction on student writing performance, the use of rubrics as a tool for evaluation, and the instructional strategies that are employed in fourth-grade classrooms in a school system in western North Carolina. This study further examined 10 randomly-selected students from each of the 13 elementary schools.

Data were collected through two surveys administered to the fourth-grade teachers within the school system. The teachers were also asked to participate in individual interviews and in a focus group. The results of the teacher surveys and focus groups were compared to identify common strategies for writing instruction, the level of

teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction, and the use of rubrics as a means of evaluation.

The 10 students from each of the elementary schools were randomly selected by choosing every third student. The scores the students received on two locally-administered and scored writing assessments were placed on a roster with the score they received on the state Fourth Grade North Carolina Writing Assessment. The scores the students received on the two locally-administered and scored writing assessments were compared to the final Fourth Grade North Carolina Writing Assessment to determine patterns in scoring using the North Carolina Writing Assessment Rubric.

Data were also collected by examining the scores all the students received by two scorers at the county level using the new North Carolina writing model pilot. An on-demand assessment was given to the entire county in December 2008. The scorers scored in the areas of features and conventions. The results were analyzed to determine the level of accuracy of scoring using the new rubric.

The information is organized within this chapter by answering the research questions presented in Chapter 1.

Research Question 1

What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing on writing instruction?

In order to properly assess the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction, two surveys were administered to the fourth-grade teachers within the research study. Cross tabulations were also conducted for six of the statements within the Writing Orientation Scale and the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing to determine the accuracy in answering the survey questions.

A cross tabulation was done in Table 7 for statements 4 and 11 for the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing. Both statements dealt with the amount of influence the home environment has on student writing achievement. Fifteen teachers responded that they Somewhat Agreed (SWA) with Statement 11, “A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student’s home environment is a large influence on his/her writing achievement.” Eleven teachers responded that they Agreed (A) with Statement 4, “The hours in my class have little influence on students’ writing performance compared to the influence of their home environment.” The findings for this cross tabulation showed that regardless of the teacher’s ability to teach

writing, that the home environment plays a significant role in the success that students achieve in writing.

A cross tabulation was also conducted in Table 8 for Statements 9 and 12 for the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing. These statements dealt with the teacher's ability to assess the writing instruction needs of individual students. Thirteen surveyed teachers Agreed (A) with Statement 9 which states, "When a student is having difficulty with a writing assignment, I would have no trouble adjusting it to his/her level." This fits with the 12 surveyed teachers that Agreed (A) with Statement 12, "If one of my students could not do a writing assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty." The surveyed teachers generally felt that they were knowledgeable in assessing the writing needs of their students.

Another cross tabulation was conducted for Statements 11 and 14 of the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing in Table 9. Both the statements in Table 9 dealt with the teacher's ability to manage student behavior during writing time. Eleven of the 30 surveyed teachers Somewhat Agreed (SWA) with Statement 11, which states, "A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her writing

achievement." Fourteen of the surveyed teachers Agreed (A) with Statement 14, "If a student becomes disruptive and noisy during writing time, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly." The surveyed teachers responded that they realized that just as the home environment plays a significant role in student writing achievement, it also affects misbehaviors that occur during writing class. Based on the survey results, they were aware of ways to improve these misbehaviors.

Table 10 presented the findings for a cross tabulation of Statements 2 and 6 of the Writing Orientation Scale. These statements both help to identify the teacher's belief in teaching proper spelling skills in conjunction with writing instruction. Thirteen of the 30 teachers responded that they Agreed (A) to Statement 2, "Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling." This is similar to the 11 teachers who responded that they also Agreed (A) to Statement 6, "It is important for children to study words in order to learn their spelling." Overall, the surveyed teachers have a strong belief in the need to teach students proper spelling skills in order to be successful writers.

A final cross tabulation was conducted in Table 11 for Statements 3 and 9 of the Writing Orientation Scale.

Twenty-two of the survey participants Strongly Agreed (SA) with Statement 9, which states, “It is important to teach children strategies for planning and revising.” Eleven of the survey participants also Disagreed (D) with Statement 3 which states, “Teachers should aim at producing writers who can write good compositions in one draft.” A conclusion can be drawn that the surveyed teachers felt that it was more important for students to be able to understand how to move through the entire writing process in an effort to produce a finished piece of writing than to be able to write a finished piece in one attempt.

Through the use of the Teacher Efficacy Scale and the Writing Orientation Scale, a low correlation was found between teacher self-efficacy and writing instruction and student writing performance. The research did not show that teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction directly impacted student writing achievement; however, the surveyed teachers did show through the two surveys that they had self-efficacy in writing instruction. They generally felt that they knew how to manage the writing classroom and assess student writing needs. A larger sample population would have to be used to link teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction and student writing achievement.

Research Question 2

What is the impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing on evaluation of writing in a school system in western North Carolina?

Thirteen interviews were conducted during the month of March. In addition to the interviews, a focus group was also conducted to identify strategies for writing instruction and ways that rubrics are used to evaluate student writing. Within the interviews and focus group, themes were identified. A common theme was the use of rubrics for content-area writing. The use of rubrics for assessing student work was mentioned in both the focus group and the interviews. All 13 of the interviewed teachers mentioned that they used rubrics for both content-area writing and for assessing student work. Within the focus group, using rubrics for content area writing was mentioned 6 times and for assessing student work 4 times.

Based on the data collected through the interviews and focus group, teacher self-efficacy in writing evaluation plays only a small role in accurately evaluating student writing; however, not enough data were present to show a significant link between the two. The data collected through the individual interviews and focus groups with fourth-grade teachers did show that teachers feel somewhat

comfortable with using rubrics for evaluation. Accuracy in scoring was not evident in the scores the students received on the writing assessments by the sample students. There was an inconsistency in scoring between the locally-scored assessments and the March assessments scored outside the state.

As the North Carolina writing assessment model changes and evolves, it will become imperative that teachers understand how to score students' work using a rubric. There needs to be consistency between scorers in order for student writing to be assessed properly.

Research Question 3

How do the ratings of locally-scored writing assessments compare to state-scored writing assessments?

The scores the sample students received from the teachers at the county level on the October and December local assessments often showed significant differences from the scores received on the North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment. Many of the sample students showed a decrease in both content and conventions between the December and March assessments.

Based on the data collected for School B in Table 14, 70% of the sample students showed lower content scores on the March assessment than on the December assessment;

however, none of the sample students showed a decrease in the area of conventions. This shows that the raters overestimated when scoring for content.

Of the sample students for School D in Table 18, 60% showed lower content scores in March than in December. This is in contrast to the 90% of the sample students who had convention scores that either remained the same or increased between the two assessments. Therefore, the scorers for the sample students for School D overestimated when scoring for content. Table 20 shows a similar discrepancy in scoring for content. Only 40% of the sample students either showed an increase in content or no change from the December to March assessment; however, there was a 100% accuracy rate in scoring for conventions.

A discrepancy in scoring was also present in Table 26 for School J. Of the sample students, 70% received lower content scores in March than in December; however, in the area of conventions, all of the students either remained the same or increased their scores. The data show that the raters overestimated when scoring for content but were accurate when scoring for conventions.

A further inconsistency in scoring can also be observed for the sample students for School K in Table 28. Only 40% of the students had conventions scores that

remained the same or increased between December and March. In contrast, 90% of the sample students received content scores that remained the same or increased between the two assessments. This shows that the scorers for School K overestimated when scoring for conventions but were accurate in scoring for content.

Five of the 10 sample students (50%) in Table 30 for School L showed a decrease in content scores; however, only 1 student (10%) showed a decrease in conventions score from December to March. The data presented show accuracy for scoring conventions but inaccuracy for scoring content.

The data presented for each of the 10 schools show that there is greater consistency when scoring for conventions than content. Nine of the 10 reporting schools showed a decrease from the December to the March assessments in the area of content. In contrast, only 3 schools showed a decrease in the area of conventions. As a result, 4 schools showed a decrease in overall proficiency between the December and March assessments.

When looking at the scores received on the 2008-2009 piloted North Carolina on-demand writing assessment administered in December, only 51.2% of the raters matched perfectly when scoring features and 54.9% matched when scoring on conventions. This evidence presents a

difference in scoring between the fourth-grade teachers within the county. The data presented in Chapter 4 showed teachers who overestimated scoring for features or conventions, while other teachers seemed to underestimate in those same areas. As a result, the scores the students received from the two scorers were quite different. Training must be done to ensure that the ratings of individual evaluators are accurate. Additional training will ensure that the teachers and students understand the features and conventions portions of the new North Carolina Fourth Grade Rubric.

Summary

Writing can be connected to all areas of the curriculum. The data collected from the interviews, focus group, and surveys show that teachers are using a variety of strategies to teach writing. They are using rubrics to evaluate student work and evaluate within the content areas. The data presented within this research show that teachers have a high level of self-efficacy in writing instruction. Teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction may play a role in student writing performance; however, the data did not show that self-efficacy plays a significant role in student writing success when teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction is present. More data

must be collected to accurately assess the overall impact of teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction and student success.

Additionally, through the interviews and focus group, the data presented showed that teachers strongly agreed that students must be taught the writing process and how to work through each phase. The sample teachers had similar strategies for teaching student writing; however, more research must be conducted to determine how effective these strategies are to student success in writing.

The data collected within the writing assessments showed that raters lacked consistency in scoring when using a rubric. For scoring in the area of content, there was a greater discrepancy than when scoring for conventions. Additional research must be done to ensure that teachers are accurately evaluating student writing using rubrics. As the new model for writing takes hold, teachers will need additional training in scoring student writing.

Recommendations

Future research in the connection between teacher self-efficacy in writing instruction and student achievement needs to be conducted. A larger population of teachers and students needs to be used within the study to accurately assess the link between the two. With the new

North Carolina writing assessment model, much research could be done to determine teacher accuracy in scoring.

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Appendix A

North Carolina Fourth Grade Writing Assessment

Content and Conventions Rubric

North Carolina General Writing Assessment at Grades 4, 7, and 10 Grade 4 Trainer Manual 2007

Content Rubric

Points	Descriptions
4	• Topic/subject is clear, though it may or may not be explicitly stated • Maintains focus on topic/subject throughout the response • Organizational structure establishes relationships between and among ideas and/or events • Consists of a logical progression of ideas and/or events and is unified and complete • Support and elaboration are related to and supportive of the topic/subject • Consists of specific, developed details • Exhibits skillful use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • Demonstrates skillful use of sentence fluency
3	• Topic/subject is generally clear, though it may or may not be explicitly stated • May exhibit minor lapses in focus on topic/subject • Organizational structure establishes relationships between and among ideas and/or events, although minor lapses may be present • Consists of a logical progression of ideas and/or events and is reasonably complete, although minor lapses may be present • Support and elaboration may have minor weaknesses in relatedness to and support of the topic/subject • Consists of some specific details • Exhibits reasonable use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • Demonstrates reasonable use of sentence fluency
2	• Topic/subject may be vague • May lose or may exhibit lapses in focus on topic/subject • Organizational structure may establish little relationship between and among ideas and/or events • May have major lapses in the logical progression of ideas and/or events and is minimally complete • Support and elaboration may have major weaknesses in relatedness to and support of the topic/subject • Consists of general and/or undeveloped details, which may be presented in a list-like fashion • Exhibits minimal use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • Demonstrates minimal use of sentence fluency
1	• Topic/subject is unclear or confusing • May fail to establish focus on topic/subject • Organizational structure may not establish connection between and among ideas and/or events • May consist of ideas and/or events that are presented in a random fashion and is incomplete or confusing • Support and elaboration attempts to support the topic/subject but may be unrelated or confusing • Consists of sparse details • Lacks use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • May not demonstrate sentence fluency
NS	• This code may be used for compositions that are entirely illegible or otherwise unscorable: blank responses, responses written in a foreign language, restatements of the prompts, and responses that are off- topic or incoherent.

North Carolina General Writing Assessment
at Grades 4, 7, and 10
Grade 4 Trainer Manual 2007

Conventions Rubric

Points	Descriptions
2	**Exhibits reasonable control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task** • Exhibits reasonable control of sentence formation • Exhibits reasonable control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case • Exhibits reasonable control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
1	**Exhibits minimal control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task** • Exhibits minimal control of sentence formation • Exhibits minimal control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case • Exhibits minimal control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
0	**Lacks control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task** • Lacks control of sentence formation • Lacks control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case • Lacks control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling

Appendix B

Scoring Calculations

North Carolina General Writing Assessment
at Grades 4, 7, and 10
Grade 4 Trainer Manual 2007

Total Writing Score Calculation Examples

Example 1

Reader 1	Content	2	**Reader 2**	Content	3	**Total Content Score**	5
	Conventions	1		Conventions	2	**Total Conventions Score**	3

(Total Content Score x 2) + Total Conventions Score = Total Writing Score

5 x 2 = 10 + 3 = **13 Achievement Level III**

Example 2

Reader 1	Content	3	**Reader 2**	Content	3	**Total Content Score**	6
	Conventions	0		Conventions	0	**Total Conventions Score**	0

(Total Content Score x 2) + Total Conventions Score = Total Writing Score

6 x 2 = 12 + 0 = **12 Achievement Level III**

Example 3

Reader 1	Content	2	**Reader 2**	Content	2	**Total Content Score**	4
	Conventions	2		Conventions	2	**Total Conventions Score**	4

(Total Content Score x 2) + Total Conventions Score = Total Writing Score

4 x 2 = 8 + 4 = **12 Achievement Level III**

Appendix C

Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing

Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing

Please answer the following questionnaire based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 6-SA (strongly agree), 5-A (agree), 4-SWA (somewhat agree), 3-SWD (somewhat disagree), 2-D (disagree), and 1-SD (strongly disagree).

		6-SA	5-A	4-SWA	3-SWD	2-D	1-SD
1.	When students' writing performance improves, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching the student.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Even a good writing teacher may not reach many students.	6	5	4	3	5	1
3.	If a student did not remember what I taught in a previous writing lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	6	5	4	3	5	1
4.	The hours in my class have little influence on students' writing performance compared to the influence of their home environment.	6	5	4	3	5	1
5.	If a student masters a new writing concept quickly, this is because I knew the necessary steps in teaching the concept.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6.	If I try really hard, I can help students with the most difficult writing problems.	6	5	4	3	2	1
7.	When a student does better than usual in writing, it is because I exerted a little extra effort.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8.	If students are not disciplined at home, they are not likely to accept any discipline during the writing period.	6	5	4	3	2	1
9.	When a student is having difficulty with a writing assignment, I would have no trouble adjusting it to his/her level.	6	5	4	3	2	1
10.	The influence of a student's home experience on writing can be overcome by good teaching.	6	5	4	3	2	1
11.	A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student's home environment is a large influence on his/her writing achievement.	6	5	4	3	2	1
12.	If one of my students could not do a writing assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	6	5	4	3	2	1
13.	The amount a student can learn in writing is primarily related to family background.	6	5	4	3	2	1
14.	If a student becomes disruptive and noisy during writing time, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	6	5	4	3	2	1
15.	When students' writing performance improves, it is usually because I found more effective teaching approaches.	6	5	4	3	2	1
16.	If parents would do more in writing with their children, I could do more.	6	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix D

Writing Orientation Scale

Writing Orientation Scale

Please answer the following questionnaire based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 6-SA (strongly agree), 5-A (agree), 4-SWA (somewhat agree), 3-SWD (somewhat disagree), 2-D (disagree), and 1-SD (strongly disagree).

	6-SA	5-A	4-SWA	3-SWD	2-D	1-SD
1. A good way to begin writing instruction is to have children copy good models of each particular type of writing.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. Teachers should aim at producing writers who can write good compositions in one draft.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (e.g., nouns, verbs) is useful in proficient writing.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. Before they begin a writing task, children who speak a nonstandard dialect of English should be reminded to use correct English.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. It is important for children to study words in order to learn their spelling.	6	5	4	3	2	1
7. Formal instruction in writing is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in writing.	6	5	4	3	2	1
8. Children need to practice writing letters to learn how to form them correctly.	6	5	4	3	2	1
9. It is important to teach children strategies for planning and revising.	6	5	4	3	2	1
10. Instead of regular grammar lessons, it is best to teach grammar when a specific need for it emerges in a child's writing.	6	5	4	3	2	1
11. With practice in writing and responding to written messages, children will gradually learn the conventions of adult writing.	6	5	4	3	2	1
12. Students need to meet frequently in small groups to react and critique each other's writing.	6	5	4	3	2	1
13. The act of composing is more important than the written work children produce.	6	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix E

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What instructional strategies do you use in your classroom to teach writing?
2. How do you use rubrics in your classroom?
3. How comfortable are you with teaching writing?
4. How do you feel about teaching writing?
5. What are your areas of strengths and weakness related to teaching writing?
6. Is there anything else that you feel is important for a successful writing program?

Appendix F

Focus Group Prompt

Focus Group Prompt

Describe how you conduct the writing program in your classroom and the factors that you feel are important to a successful writing program.

Appendix G

Results of Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing

Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing

Statement	N	6-SA	5-A	4-SWA	3-SWD	2-D	1-SD
1	31	7	7	12	3	2	0
2	31	4	10	5	5	5	2
3	30	1	17	10	1	2	0
4	30	1	3	7	5	10	4
5	30	3	6	15	5	1	0
6	30	5	12	8	3	2	0
7	30	1	3	9	10	7	0
8	30	0	3	5	14	7	1
9	30	4	13	10	2	1	0
10	30	1	12	14	1	2	0
11	30	0	0	7	14	7	2
12	30	2	12	10	3	3	0
13	30	1	1	6	10	8	4
14	30	7	14	8	1	0	0
15	29	5	9	11	3	1	0
16	30	2	8	13	5	2	0

Appendix H

Results of Teacher Writing Orientation Scale

Writing Orientation Scale

Statement	N	6-SA	5-A	4-SWA	3-SWD	2-D	1-SD
1	31	2	10	5	2	7	5
2	30	8	13	4	4	2	0
3	31	0	4	3	11	8	4
4	31	3	10	12	4	1	1
5	31	1	7	8	9	5	1
6	31	7	11	8	2	1	2
7	31	9	15	7	0	0	0
8	31	17	8	6	0	0	0
9	31	22	9	0	0	0	0
10	31	2	6	7	9	1	6
11	31	4	7	16	2	2	0
12	31	8	13	8	0	2	0
13	31	1	3	17	2	8	0

Appendix I

Three Parts of the Writing Orientation Scale

Part 1 Writing Orientation Scale

Items	SD		D		SWD		SWA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. A good way to begin writing instruction is to have children copy good models of each particular type of writing.	(5)	16.13	(7)	22.58	(2)	6.45	(5)	16.13
2. Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling.			(2)	6/45	(4)	12.90	(4)	12.90
3. Teachers should aim at producing writers who can write good compositions in one draft.	(4)	13.33	(8)	26.67	(11)	36.67	(3)	10.00
4. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (e.g., nouns, verbs) is useful in proficient writing.	(1)	3.23	(1)	3.23	(4)	12.90	(12)	38.71
5. Before they begin a writing task, children who speak a nonstandard dialect of English should be reminded to use correct English.	(1)	3.23	(5)	16.13	(9)	29.03	(8)	25.81

Part 1 Writing Orientation Scale

Items	A		SA	
	N	%	N	%
1. A good way to begin writing instruction is to have children copy good models of each particular type of writing.	(10)	32.26	(2)	6.45
2. Before children begin a writing task, teachers should remind them to use correct spelling.	(13)	41.94	(8)	25.81
3. Teachers should aim at producing writers who can write good compositions in one draft.	(4)	13.33		
4. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (e.g., nouns, verbs) is useful in proficient writing.	(10)	32.26	(3)	9.68
5. Before they begin a writing task, children who speak a nonstandard dialect of English should be reminded to use correct English.	(7)	22.58	(1)	3.23

Part 2 Writing Orientation Scale

Items	SD		D		SWD		SWA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
6. It is important for children to study words in order to learn their spelling.	(2)	6.45	(1)	3.23	(2)	6.45	(8)	25.81
7. Formal instruction in writing is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in writing.							(7)	22.58
8. Children need to practice writing letters to learn how to form them correctly.							(6)	19.35
9. It is important to teach children strategies for planning and revising.								

Part 2 Writing Orientation Scale

Items	A		SA	
	N	%	N	%
6. It is important for children to study words in order to learn their spelling.	(11)	35.48	(7)	22.58
7. Formal instruction in writing is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in writing.	(15)	48.39	(9)	29.03
8. Children need to practice writing letters to learn how to form them correctly.	(8)	25.81	(17)	54.84
9. It is important to teach children strategies for planning and revising.	(9)	29.03	(9)	29.03

Part 3 Writing Orientation Scale

Items	A		SA	
	N	%	N	%
10. Instead of regular grammar lessons, it is best to teach grammar when a specific need for it emerges in a child's writing.	(6)	19.35	(2)	6.45
11. With practice in writing and responding to written messages, children will gradually learn the conventions of adult writing.	(7)	22.58	(4)	12.90
12. Students need to meet frequently in small groups to react and critique each other's writing.	(13)	41.94	(8)	25.81
13. The act of composing is more important than the written work children produce.	(3)	9.68	(1)	3.23

Part 3 Writing Orientation Scale

Items	SD		D		SWD		SWA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
10. Instead of regular grammar lessons, it is best to teach grammar when a specific need for it emerges in a child's writing.	(6)	19.35	(1)	3.23	(9)	29.03	(7)	22.58
11. With practice in writing and responding to written messages, children will gradually learn the conventions of adult writing.			(2)	6.45	(2)	6.45	(16)	52.61
12. Students need to meet frequently in small groups to react and critique each other's writing.			(2)	6.45			(8)	25.81
13. The act of composing is more important than the written work children produce.			(8)	25.81	(2)	6.45	(17)	54.84

Appendix J

North Carolina Features Rubric Pilot

Content Rubric

Points	Descriptions
4	• Topic/subject is clear, though it may or may not be explicitly stated • Maintains focus on topic/subject throughout the response • Organizational structure establishes relationships between and among ideas and/or events • Consists of a logical progression of ideas and/or events and is unified and complete • Support and elaboration are related to and supportive of the topic/subject • Consists of specific, developed details • Exhibits skillful use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • Demonstrates skillful use of sentence fluency
3	• Topic/subject is generally clear, though it may or may not be explicitly stated • May exhibit minor lapses in focus on topic/subject • Organizational structure establishes relationships between and among ideas and/or events, although minor lapses may be present • Consists of a logical progression of ideas and/or events and is reasonably complete, although minor lapses may be present • Support and elaboration may have minor weaknesses in relatedness to and support of the topic/subject • Consists of some specific details • Exhibits reasonable use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • Demonstrates reasonable use of sentence fluency
2	• Topic/subject may be vague • May lose or may exhibit lapses in focus on topic/subject • Organizational structure may establish little relationship between and among ideas and/or events • May have major lapses in the logical progression of ideas and/or events and is minimally complete • Support and elaboration may have major weaknesses in relatedness to and support of the topic/subject • Consists of general and/or undeveloped details, which may be presented in a list-like fashion • Exhibits minimal use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • Demonstrates minimal use of sentence fluency
1	• Topic/subject is unclear or confusing; • May fail to establish focus on topic/subject • Organizational structure may not establish connection between and among ideas and/or events • May consist of ideas and/or events that are presented in a random fashion and is incomplete or confusing • Support and elaboration attempts to support the topic/subject but may be unrelated or confusing • Consists of sparse details • Lacks use of vocabulary that is precise and purposeful • May not demonstrate sentence fluency
NS	• This code may be used for compositions that are entirely illegible or otherwise unscorable: blank responses, responses written in a foreign language, restatements of the prompts, and responses that are off- topic or incoherent.

Appendix K

North Carolina Conventions Rubric Pilot

Conventions Rubric

Points	Descriptions
2	**Exhibits reasonable control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task** • Exhibits reasonable control of sentence formation • Exhibits reasonable control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case • Exhibits reasonable control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
1	**Exhibits minimal control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task** • Exhibits minimal control of sentence formation • Exhibits minimal control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case • Exhibits minimal control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
0	**Lacks control of grammatical conventions appropriate to the writing task** • Lacks control of sentence formation • Lacks control of standard usage including agreement, tense, and case • Lacks control of mechanics including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
Note:	**Students who receive accommodations that invalidate the conventions score (i.e., Dictation to Scribe) will have 0 entered for their conventions score.**